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MILTON HANDBOOK

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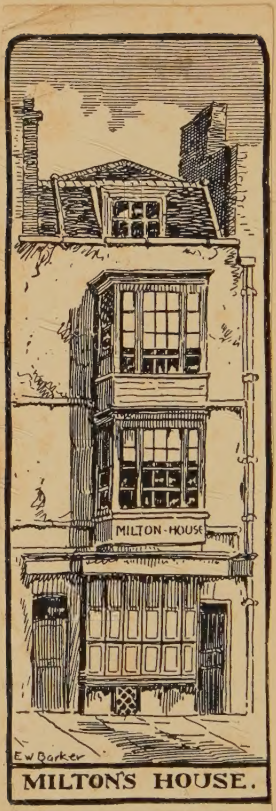

MILTON'S HOUSE.

A Bit of Old London
—From Vol. XX

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MILTON AT THE AGE OF 21

(From the picture by Van Der Gucht at Nuneham)

A MILTON HANDBOOK

BY

JAMES HOLLY HANFORD

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH
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PREFACE

This volume aims to supply in brief compass a body of materials which will be useful in the scholarly study of the poet Milton. Life is too short to permit many men to master the detail embodied in David Masson's seven volume biography, not to speak of the additions which have been made to Miltonic lore since Masson's time. It is too short, even, to exhaust the data contained in Milton's own voluminous works. The need of a "ready and easy way" is witnessed by the numerous brief lives and by the annotated school editions of the poems and selections from the prose. Something more comprehensive seems, however, desirable. The mature student will wish to survey Milton's entire literary activity, to be in possession of the essential facts regarding the origin, dates, and circumstances of his individual works, and to have, at least in brief, the assured or reasonably assured results of learned activity on the many other issues and points of interest about him. It is only thus that his significance in English literature can be understood or his greatness properly estimated.

Oddly enough no companion to Milton studies, comparable in scope to the available Shakespeare and Chaucer handbooks, has ever been written. In undertaking to supply the deficiency I have tried to select from the vast mass of material available what seemed most relevant and useful, giving in the footnotes a running bibli-

ography (indexed at the end of the volume) which will enable the student to pursue the subject further at any point. I have necessarily left to the editors and to the various special dictionaries of Milton's language and allusions (listed in the general bibliography) the task of supplying a detailed interpretation of the texts. Discussion of purely critical problems is also omitted, though the general course of Miltonic opinion is sketched in the final chapter. The first process in the study of Milton should be interpretation rather than judgment, and it is to this end that the materials given in the present volume are aimed. In view, finally, of the ready accessibility in cyclopedias and elsewhere of summary statements of the outward events of Milton's life, and because I am convinced of the superior value of the documents themselves over any modern digest of them, I have substituted for the usual biography the statements of Milton himself and those who knew him, arranged according to the accepted periods of his career.

Of the inadequacy of this handbook to represent the field in which it enters, I am well aware. Miltonic scholarship and interpretation, in distinction from purely aesthetic criticism, have made great strides of late. The discussions are complex and their full results as yet unmeasured. But it is quite certain that the present generation, in discarding many traditional presuppositions and prejudices, and in bringing to bear new data of importance, is in the way of attaining a sounder conception of Milton's essential quality and significance. Interest in him has been wider in the past, but it was never more vital than it is to-day. The glory of his utterance is as highly valued as ever, the power of his poetic and phil-

osophic thought, as contrasted with the dogmatic aspects of his inherited theology, much more so. His personality, seen in the light of modern psychological knowledge, is no longer to be envisaged, whether with enthusiasm or dislike, in the simple terms of Puritanism, but rather as a complex of emotions and restraints which constitutes one of the most curious phenomena in the annals of poetic genius.

The present volume deals with these matters all too briefly. It will, however, at least guide the reader to the most important of them and it will be justified if it assists him to see Milton in clearer focus as the great figure in whom the intellectual and aesthetic enthusiasms of the Renaissance, the moral forces of the Reformation, and the fervor of a patriotic love of liberty met at their height and dwelt together for a moment, not inharmoniously.

My obligations to authorities, particularly to the more recent ones, are pretty well indicated in the footnotes. But I have omitted specific references to the authority to whom I owe the most—David Masson. His work is thoroughly indexed, and it may be assumed to be my general source for all biographical and historical data where no other is mentioned.

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A MILTON HANDBOOK

CHAPTER I

MATERIALS FOR MILTON'S BIOGRAPHY

THE life of Milton is known to us in far more fullness of detail than that of any other major English poet before the eighteenth century. The reasons for this fact are various. In the first place, he was in his own time a public figure, concerned in political events of a sensational character. His pamphlets in defense of liberty made his name one with which, to use his own extravagant but not wholly unjustifiable phrase, "all Europe rang from side to side." His service as Latin Secretary to the Council of State for eleven momentous years entitled him to the attention, favorable and unfavorable, which was accorded to the other members of the Commonwealth government. Then, too, he was a scholar in the days when scholarship was still held in high esteem. As such he was in communication with many distinguished men at home and on the Continent and was noticed as he never would have been in the capacity of a mere man of letters. Yet Milton also laid claim to the attention of his contemporaries as a poet. Although the seventeenth century possessed no such curiosity in literary biography as we have to-day, the modern interest in such matters was

beginning to develop, and before the generation of those who had known Milton personally had passed away it was thought worth while to set down regarding him many of those intimate details of personality and habit which we wish for in vain in the case of Chaucer, Spenser, or Shakespeare.

Finally, and this perhaps is most important of all, Milton was intensely concerned to have his own image stand in the public eye as he himself conceived it. He inherited the Renaissance thirst for enduring fame and he combined with this desire an enthusiasm for self-portraiture akin to that of the romantic poets of modern times. He often had occasion to justify himself in his controversial writings against attacks upon his private life and he did so with the greatest gusto. Like all humanists he preserved and published a number of his private letters. Carrying, finally, the same conscious interest in his own personality into the field of creative art, he made his poetry as well as his prose an intimate though dignified record of his own experience.

We have, then, the material for a life of Milton, as abundant in its detail of his outward career as it is vital in its human interest. There remain of course, problems of interpretation. Everyone agrees that Milton was no ordinary person; but the judgments that have been passed on his personality and character have varied with the political sympathies, the moral attitude, and the personal temperament of each biographer. Every age, and, indeed, every individual, will, in a measure, have his own Milton, and since this is so it is desirable to have before us the actual materials, in the words of Milton himself and those who knew him, on which our estimates are

based. The most important of these, excepting the poetry itself, are given as fully as possible in the ensuing pages.

Of the individual documents from which citation has been made Milton's *Second Defence of the English People* contains the fullest statement he ever made of the facts of his private and public career. The general credibility of this and other utterances about himself cannot be questioned. If, looking back upon his actions from a later period, he puts his motives in the most ideal light, it is because he actually so interpreted them, and who shall determine the exact degree to which, in any particular instance, he deceived himself? It has been argued [1] that his remark in *Areopagitica* about visiting Galileo in Italy must be a fabrication, since Galileo was at that time sick and forbidden all communication with foreigners by the Inquisition. But the evidence is too inconclusive to stand against Milton's express statement.

The most complete of the contemporary biographies is that of Edward Phillips, first printed as an introduction to a translation of Milton's *State Letters* in 1694. Phillips was Milton's nephew and pupil. As an actual intimate of his uncle's household during his boyhood and a frequent visitor till Milton's death, his opportunity for knowing the circumstances of his public and domestic life were practically unlimited. Yet we must remember, in reading, for example, his detailed account of Milton's first marriage, that he was a boy of twelve when these events took place. He was, moreover, obviously a person of smaller mould, proud of Milton but incapable of comprehending his greatness, and he was not, I think, con-

[1] Liljegren, *Studies in Milton.*

stitutionally a truth-teller. In spite of occasional romancing, however, his narrative is authentic.

Almost equally valuable is the *Anonymous Biography* discovered in 1889 among the papers of Anthony Wood and first published by Parsons in 1902 under the title of *The Earliest Life of Milton.* The writer is unknown. He may have been Milton's friend and physician, Dr. Paget, or he may, as the late John Smart suggested,[2] have been Cyriack Skinner. He writes from an intimate and sympathetic understanding, evidently sharing Milton's political and religious ideas and seeming particularly well informed about such matters as his literary habits and use of amanuensis assistance. The exactness with which he describes Milton's disease of the eyes and the scene of his deathbed shows that he must have stood very close to him. This biography, which, by the way, was not used by Masson, supplies comparatively few facts unknown from other sources; but it is important as furnishing a systematic account of Milton parallel to, and independent of, that of Phillips.

Still further first-hand material is given by John Aubrey in the notes which he collected for Anthony Wood's use in his *Athenae* and *Fasti Oxoniensis.* Aubrey had not only known Milton himself but had inquired diligently about him from his widow, from his brother Christopher Milton, from Edward Phillips, and from others. In many cases he gives the sources of his information. Though much of it is gossip it is just such gossip as we wish to have, and it appears to be on the whole trustworthy. His notes on Milton were published by William Godwin in his *Life of E. and J. Phillips* and subsequently by Andrew

[2] In a letter to the author.

Clark in his edition of Aubrey's *Brief Lives*. Anthony Wood himself based his *Life of Milton* in the *Fasti Oxonienses* (1692) chiefly on the material furnished by Aubrey and on the manuscript of the anonymous biographer. He, therefore, does not rank as a first-hand witness.

Of the later biographers two, John Toland and Jonathan Richardson, contribute a few new items from their own recollection. With them the personal tradition ends. There remain, however, the various records—entries of the births, marriages, and deaths of the Milton family; transfers of property, minutes of the Council of State, etc., which give documentary information on essential points. Much of this was brought to light in the eighteenth century and is contained in Todd's edition, but the great work of collecting and weighing it was done by David Masson. The materials discovered since his time have been mere gleanings. There is finally a considerable amount of manuscript in Milton's hand or in that of his amanuenses, including, besides the text of his minor poems, a Commonplace Book made up of citations from his reading, his literary plans, marginalia in books from his library, a few of his letters, etc. This material was minutely described by the bookseller Sotheby in his bulky *Ramblings in Elucidation of the Autograph of Milton,* and the most important items are noted in their proper connection in this volume.

Since Milton and his early biographers are often incomplete, and sometimes inaccurate, in their statements, it will be well to give here, at the risk of some repetition, a chronological summary of the most important facts of his outward life as they have been ascertained by modern

scholarship. Fuller detail regarding the composition, publication, and reception of his works will be found in later chapters, and three passages of importance as revelations of his inner life and thought about himself are quoted in the Appendix.

John Milton, son of John Milton, Scrivener, was born in Bread Street, Cheapside, London, December 9, 1608. He had an elder sister, Anne, afterward wife of Edward Phillips, senior. His brother Christopher, who later became a baronet and a somewhat distinguished lawyer, was born in 1615. After being tutored at home by Thomas Young, Milton was sent, not later than 1620, to St. Paul's School. On February 12, 1625, he was admitted as a pensioner of Christ's College, Cambridge, and matriculated April 9 of the same year. He kept every term at the University, taking the degree of B.A. March 26, 1629, and that of M.A. July 3, 1632.

After graduation Milton settled at Horton, where his father had retired in 1632 and remained there most of the time until April, 1638, when he set out for the Continent. Traveling by way of Paris he reached Florence probably by August and stayed there two months. He was in Rome during October and November, visited Naples, and was back at Florence before March, 1639. He was at Geneva on his way home by July 10, 1639, and back in England before the end of the month. Milton took up lodgings in St. Bride's Churchyard, London, and shortly after engaged a house in Aldersgate Street. From 1640 to 1647 he was more or less engaged in teaching, having at first his two nephews, John and Edward Phillips, and after 1643 other pupils as members of his household.

His first controversial work, *Of Reformation,* appeared in May, 1641, and others followed in rapid succession throughout the period of the Revolution and the Commonwealth. His first volume of poems was published in 1645.

In 1643 Milton married Mary Powell, daughter of Richard Powell, a Cavalier of Forest Hill, Oxfordshire, with whom Milton had had financial dealings. She left him shortly after but returned in 1645, in which year Milton moved to a larger house in the Barbican. His first child, Anne, was born on July 29, 1646; his second, Mary, on October 25, 1648; his third, John, who died in infancy, on March 16, 1651; and his last daughter, Deborah, on May 2, 1652. His wife died in the same year. The surrender of Oxford in 1646 had ruined the Powell family and they took refuge with the Miltons for a short time. After the death at this time of Richard Powell legal difficulties arose between his widow and Milton. John Milton senior died March 15, 1647. In that year Milton gave up his teaching and moved to a smaller house in High Holborn.

As a result of his services to the cause of the Commonwealth, and particularly of the writing of *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates,* Milton was appointed Latin Secretary to the Council of State and sworn into that office March 15, 1649, at a salary of £289 14s. 4½d. a year. He was allowed chambers in Whitehall, but was deprived of them in 1652 and forced to move to a house in Petty Fraunce, Westminster. His blindness, which had been increasing for some time, became complete in that year and he was granted assistance in his office. In 1655 his salary was reduced and he no longer attended meetings

of the Council, but he continued to serve through the Protectorate and was not dismissed from office until 1660.

On November 12, 1656, he married Katharine Woodcock, who gave birth to a daughter, October 19, 1657. Both mother and child died in the February following.

At the Restoration in 1660 Milton was concealed for a time in a friend's house in Bartholomew Close. He was arrested during the summer of that year but ordered released on payment of his fees. On February 24, 1663, he married his third wife, Elizabeth Minshull, a woman thirty years younger than himself. Shortly afterward he moved to a house in Artillery Walk, Bunhill Fields, and lived there the rest of his life, except for a short period during the plague of 1665 when he resided at Chalfont St. Giles, Buckinghamshire, in a house which is still preserved. *Paradise Lost,* begun before the Restoration, was published in 1667, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* in 1671. A second edition of his early poems was issued in 1673. Milton died of gout November 8, 1674, and was buried in St. Giles, Cripplegate, beside his father. His three daughters and his widow survived him, the latter dying in 1727. The last of Milton's known descendants was Elizabeth Foster, daughter of Deborah Milton. She died in 1754.

HOME ENVIRONMENT AND EARLY SCHOOLING (1608–1625)

MILTON'S STATEMENT. I will now mention who and whence I am. I was born at London, of an honest family; my father was distinguished by the undeviating integ-

rity of his life; my mother, by the esteem in which she was held, and the alms which she bestowed. My father destined me from a child to the pursuits of literature; and my appetite for knowledge was so voracious, that, from twelve years of age, I hardly ever left my studies, or went to bed before midnight. This primarily led to my loss of sight. My eyes were naturally weak, and I was subject to frequent headaches; which, however, could not chill the ardour of my curiosity, or retard the progress of my improvement. My father had me daily instructed in the grammar-school, and by other masters at home. He then, after I had acquired a proficiency in various languages, and had made a considerable progress in philosophy, sent me to the University of Cambridge. —*Second Defence of the English People.*

EDWARD PHILLIPS' ACCOUNT. He was born in London, in a house in Bread Street, the lease whereof, as I take it, but for certain it was a house in Bread Street, became in time part of his estate, in the year of our Lord 1606.[3] His father John Milton, an honest, worthy, and substantial citizen of London, by profession a scrivener; to which he voluntarily betook himself, by the advice and assistance of an intimate friend of his, eminent in that calling, upon his being cast out by his father, a bigoted Roman Catholic, for embracing, when young, the protestant faith, and abjuring the popish tenets. For he is said to have been descended of an ancient family of the Miltons, of Milton near Abingdon in Oxfordshire,[4] where they had been a long time seated, as appears by

[3] Error for 1608.

[4] Milton's immediate ancestors lived at Stanton St. John, Oxfordshire. See Masson I, 13 ff.

the monuments still to be seen in Milton church; till one of the family having taken the wrong side, in the contest between the Houses of York and Lancaster, was sequestered of all his estate, but what he held by his wife. However, certain it is, that this vocation he followed for many years, at his said house in Bread Street, with success suitable to his industry and prudent conduct of his affairs. Yet he did not so far quit his own generous and ingenious inclinations, as to make himself wholly a slave to the world; for he sometimes found vacant hours to the study (which he made his recreation) of the noble science of music, in which he advanced to that perfection, that as I have been told, and as I take it by our author himself, he composed an *In Nomine* of forty parts; for which he was rewarded with a gold medal and chain by a Polish prince, to whom he presented it. However, this is a truth not to be denied, that for several songs of his composition, after the way of these times, (three or four of which are still to be seen in old Wilby's set of Airs, besides some compositions of his in Ravencroft's Psalms), he gained the reputation of a considerable master in this most charming of all the liberal sciences. Yet all this while, he managed his grand affair of this world with such prudence and diligence, that by the assistance of divine Providence favoring his honest endeavors, he gained a competent estate, whereby he was enabled to make a handsome provision both for the education and maintenance of his children; for three he had, and no more, all by one wife, Sarah, of the family of the Castons, derived originally from Wales, a woman of incomparable virtue and goodness: John the eldest, the sub-

ject of our present work; Christopher; and an only daughter Ann. . . .

But to hasten back to our matter in hand. John, our author, who was destined to be the ornament and glory of his country, was sent, together with his brother, to Paul's school, whereof Dr. Gill the elder was then chief master; where he was entered into the first rudiments of learning, and advanced therein with that admirable success, not more by the discipline of the school and good instructions of his masters (for that he had another master, possibly at his father's house, appears by the *Fourth Elegy* of his Latin poems written in his 18th year to Thomas Young, pastor of the English Company of Merchants at Hamburg, wherein he owns and styles him his master), than by his own happy genius, prompt wit and apprehension, and insuperable industry: for he generally sat up half the night, as well in voluntary improvements of his own choice, as the exact perfecting of his school exercises.

So that at the age of 15 he was full ripe for academic learning, and accordingly was sent to the University of Cambridge.—*Life of Milton.*

CAMBRIDGE (1625–1632)

MILTON'S STATEMENT. Here I passed seven years in the usual course of instruction and study, with the approbation of the good, and without any stain upon my character, till I took the degree of Master of Arts. After this I did not, as this miscreant feigns, run away into Italy, but of my own accord retired to my father's house, whither I was accompanied by the regrets of most of

the fellows of the college, who showed me uncommon marks of friendship and esteem.—*Second Defence of the English People.*

ITEMS FROM AUBREY. Was a very hard student in the university, and performed all his exercises there with very good applause. His first tutor there was Mr. Chapell, from whom receiving some unkindness [whipped him], he was afterwards (though it seemed opposite to the rules of the college), transferred to the tuition of one Mr. Tovell [Tovey], who died parson of Lutterworth. . . .

He was scarce so tall as I am—quaere, quot feet I am high: resp. of middle stature—He had auburn hair. His complexion exceeding fair—he was so fair that they called him the Lady of Christ College—. Oval face, his eye a dark gray. . . . His widow has his picture drawn very well and like when a Cambridge scholar. She has his picture when a Cambridge scholar, which ought to be engraven; for the pictures before his books are not at all like him.—*Collections for the Life of Milton.*

ILLUSTRATIONS OF MILTON'S RELATIONS TO THE UNIVERSITY. . . . Me at present that city contains which the Thames washes with its ebbing wave; and me, not unwilling, my father's house now possesses. At present it is not my care to revisit the reedy Cam; nor does the love of my forbidden rooms yet cause me grief. Nor do naked fields please me, where soft shades are not to be had. How ill that place suits the votaries of Apollo! Nor am I in the humor still to bear the threats of a harsh master, and other things not to be submitted to by my genius.—*Elegy I. Masson's translation.*

. . . Among us, as far as I know, there are only two

or three who without any acquaintance with criticism or philosophy, do not instantly engage with raw and untutored judgments in the study of theology; and of this they acquire only a slender smattering, not more than sufficient to enable them to patch together a sermon with scraps pilfered, with little discrimination, from this author and from that. Hence I fear lest our clergy should relapse into the sacerdotal ignorance of a former age. Since I find so few associates in study here, I should instantly direct my steps to London, if I had not determined to spend the summer vacation in the depths of literary solitude, and, as it were, hide myself in the chamber of the Muses.—*Letter to Alexander Gill, July 2, 1628.*

HORTON (1632–1638)

MILTON'S STATEMENT. On my father's estate, where he had determined to pass the remainder of his days, I enjoyed an interval of uninterrupted leisure, which I entirely devoted to the perusal of Greek and Latin authors; though I occasionally visited the metropolis, either for the sake of purchasing books, or of learning something new in mathematics or in music, in which I, at that time, found a source of pleasure and amusement. In this manner I spent five years till my mother's death.—*Second Defence of the English People.*

FROM A LETTER TO AN UNKNOWN FRIEND.[5] Sir,—Be-

[5] This letter, which was evidently written not long after Milton's retirement to Horton in 1632, was not published in the poet's lifetime, but two drafts of it exist in his handwriting in the Cambridge manuscript. It shows him taking the occasion of some older friend's remonstrance at his apparent idleness to search his own motives and satisfy himself and others that his course

sides that in sundry respects I must acknowledge me to profit by you whenever we meet, you are often to me, and were yesterday especially, as a good watchman to admonish that the hours of the night pass on (for so I call my life, as yet obscure and unserviceable to mankind), and that the day with me is at hand, wherein Christ commands us to labor while there is yet light. Which, because I am persuaded you do for no other purpose than out of a desire that God should be honored in every one, I therefore think myself bound, though unasked, to give you an account, as often as occasion is, of this my tardy moving, according to the precept of my conscience, which I firmly trust is not without God. Yet now I will not strain for any set apology, but only refer myself to what my mind shall have at any time to declare herself at her best ease.

But if you think, as you said, that too much love of learning is at fault, and that I have given up myself to dream away my years in the arms of studious retirement, like Endymion with the moon, as the tale of Latmus goes, yet consider that, if it were no more but the mere love of learning, whether it proceed from a principle bad, good, or natural, it could not have held out thus long against so strong opposition on the other side of every kind. For, if it be bad, why should not all the fond hopes that forward youth and vanity are fledge with, together with gain, pride, and ambition, call me forward more powerfully than a poor, regardless, and unprofitable sin of curiosity should be able to withhold me; whereby a

of life is not a violation of his serious sense of responsibility. The conclusion, which contains the *Sonnet on His Being Arrived to the Age of Twenty-Three* and seems to imply that Milton is hesitating regarding his earlier intention to enter the Church, is here omitted.

man cuts himself off from all action, and becomes the most helpless, pusillanimous, and unweaponed creature in the world, the most unfit and unable to do that which all mortals most aspire to, either to be useful to his friends or to offend his enemies? Or, if it be thought a natural proneness, there is against that a much more potent inclination inbred, which about this time of a man's life solicits most—the desire of house and family of his own; to which nothing is esteemed more helpful than the early entering into creditable employment, and nothing hindering than this affected solitariness. And, though this were enough, yet there is another act, if not of pure, yet of refined, nature, no less available to dissuade prolonged obscurity—a desire of honor and repute and immortal fame, seated in the breast of every true scholar; which all make haste to by the readiest ways of publishing and divulging conceived merits—as well those that shall, as those that never shall, obtain it. Nature, therefore, would presently work the more prevalent way, if there were nothing but this inferior bent of herself to restrain her. Lastly, the love of learning, as it is the pursuit of something good, it would sooner follow the more excellent and supreme good known and presented, and so be quickly diverted from the empty and fantastic chase of shadows and notions, to the solid good flowing from due and timely obedience to that command in the Gospel set out by the terrible feasing of him that hid the talent.

It is more probable, therefore, that not the endless night of speculation, but this very consideration of that great commandment, does not press forward, as soon as many do, to undergo, but keeps off, with a sacred and religious advisement how *best* to undergo, not taking thought of

being *late,* so it give advantage to be more *fit;* for those that came latest lost nothing when the master of the vineyard came to give each one his hire. . . .

FROM A LATIN LETTER TO CHARLES DIODATI, LONDON, SEPT. 23, 1637. I was long kept waiting for a letter from you, which you had engaged to write; but when no letter came my old regard for you suffered not, I can assure you, the smallest diminution, for I supposed that the same apology for remissness, which you had employed in the beginning of our correspondence, you would again employ. This was a supposition agreeable to truth and to the intimacy between us. For I do not think that true friendship consists in the frequency of letters or in professions of regard, which may be counterfeited; but it is so deeply rooted in the heart and affections, as to support itself against the rudest blast. . . . But now you have got possession of this despotic citadel of medicine, do not alarm me with the menace of being obliged to repay those six hundred healths which you have bestowed if I should, which God forbid, ever forfeit your friendship. Remove that formidable battery which you seem to have placed upon my breast to keep off all sickness but what comes by your permission. But that you may not indulge any excess of menace I must inform you that I cannot help loving you such as you are; for whatever the Deity may have bestowed upon me in other respects, he has certainly inspired me, if any ever were inspired, with a passion for the good and fair. Nor did Ceres, according to the fable, ever seek her daughter Proserpine with such unceasing solicitude, as I have sought this perfect model of the beautiful in all the forms and appearances of things (for many are the forms of the

divinities). I am wont day and night to continue my search; and I follow in the way in which you go before. Hence I feel an irresistible impulse to cultivate the friendship of him who, despising the prejudices and false conceptions of the vulgar, dares to think, speak, and be that which the highest wisdom has in every age taught to be the best. . . .

But now I am sure you wish me to gratify your curiosity, and to let you know what I am doing, or am meditating to do. Hear me, my Diodati, and suffer me to speak without blushing, in a more lofty strain. Do you ask what I am meditating? By the help of Heaven, an immortality of fame. But what am I doing? I am letting my wings grow and preparing to fly; but my Pegasus has not yet feathers enough to soar aloft in the fields of air. I will now tell you seriously what I design: to take chambers in one of the Inns of Court, where I may have the benefit of a pleasant and shady walk; and where I with a few associates may enjoy more comfort when I choose to stay at home and have a more elegant society when I choose to go abroad. In my present situation, you know in what obscurity I am buried and to what inconveniences I am exposed. You shall likewise have some information respecting my studies. I went through the perusal of the Greek authors [i. e. historians] to the time when they ceased to be Greeks; I was long employed in unraveling the obscure history of the Italians under the Lombards and the Franks and Germans, to the time when they received their liberty from Rudolphus, king of Germany. From that time it will be better to read separately the particular transactions of each state. . . . In the meantime, if you can do it without

inconvenience, I will thank you to send me Giustiniani the Historian of Venice.

FROM A LETTER OF SIR HENRY WOTTON TO MILTON, APRIL 13, 1638.[6] Sir, It was a special favour when you lately bestowed upon me here the first taste of your acquaintance, though no longer than to make me know that I wanted more time to value it and to enjoy it rightly; and, in truth, if I could then have imagined your further stay in these parts, which I understood afterwards by Mr. H., I would have been bold, in our vulgar phrase, to mend my draught (for you left me with an extreme thirst), and to have begged your conversation again, jointly with your said learned friend, at a poor meal or two, that we might have bandied together some good authors of the ancient time; among which I observe you to have been familiar.

Since your going, you have charged me with new obligations, both for a very kind letter from you dated the 6th of this month, and for a dainty piece of entertainment which came therewith. Wherein I should much commend the tragical part, if the lyrical did not ravish me with a certain Doric delicacy in your Songs and Odes, whereto

[6] Sir Henry Wotton, after a long life spent in ambassadorial service abroad, was now retired as Provost of Eton College. He was a distinguished man, of broad culture and ripe experience, the finest type of Elizabethan gentleman and scholar, with an exquisite taste also for English literature. This letter is the first brilliant recognition of Milton's merits. It was published in the 1645 edition of the Poems and refers to the 1637 edition of *Comus*, a copy of which Milton had sent to his new friend. Mr. H. is probably John Hales of Eton. "The late R." is Thomas Randolph, though no copy of his poems bound with *Comus* is known. The last part of the letter contains suggestions as to Milton's proposed travels.

I must confess to have seen yet nothing parallel in our language: *Ipsa molities.* But I must not omit to tell you that I now only owe you thanks for intimating unto me (how modestly soever) the true artificer. For the work itself I had viewed some good while before with singular delight; having received it from our common friend Mr. R, in the very close of the late R.'s poems, printed at Oxford: whereunto it was added (as I now suppose) that the accessory might help out the principal, according to the art of Stationers, and to leave the reader *con la bocca dolce.* . . .

ITALY (1638–1639)

MILTON'S STATEMENT. I then became anxious to visit foreign parts, and particularly Italy. My father gave me his permission, and I left home with one servant. On my departure, the celebrated Henry Wotton, who had long been King James's ambassador at Venice, gave me a signal proof of his regard, in an elegant letter which he wrote, breathing not only the warmest friendship, but containing some maxims of conduct which I found very useful in my travels. The noble Thomas Scudamore, King Charles's ambassador, to whom I carried letters of recommendation, received me most courteously at Paris. His lordship gave me a card of introduction to the learned Hugo Grotius, at that time ambassador from the Queen of Sweden to the French court; whose acquaintance I anxiously desired, and to whose house I was accompanied by some of his lordship's friends. A few days after, when I set out for Italy, he gave me letters to the English merchants on my route, that they might show me any civilities

in their power. Taking ship at Nice, I arrived at Genoa, and afterwards visited Leghorn, Pisa, and Florence. In the latter city, which I have always more particularly esteemed for the elegance of its dialect, its genius, and its taste, I stopped about two months; when I contracted an intimacy with many persons of rank and learning; and was a constant attendant at their literary parties; a practice which prevails there, and tends so much to the diffusion of knowledge, and the preservation of friendship. No time will ever abolish the agreeable recollections which I cherish of Jacob Gaddi, Carolo Dati, Frescobaldo, Cultellero, Bonomatthai, Clementillo, Francisco, and many others. From Florence I went to Siena, thence to Rome, where, after I had spent about two months in viewing the antiquities of that renowned city, where I experienced the most friendly attentions from Lucas Holstein, and other learned and ingenious men, I continued my route to Naples. There I was introduced by a certain recluse, with whom I had travelled from Rome, to John Baptista Manso, marquis of Villa, a nobleman of distinguished rank and authority, to whom Torquato Tasso, the illustrious poet, inscribed his book on friendship. During my stay, he gave me singular proofs of his regard: he himself conducted me round the city, and to the palace of the viceroy; and more than once paid me a visit at my lodgings. On my departure he gravely apologised for not having shown me more civility, which he said he had been restrained from doing, because I had spoken with so little reserve on matters of religion. When I was preparing to pass over into Sicily and Greece, the melancholy intelligence which I received of the civil commotions in England made me alter my purpose; for I thought it base to be travelling for

amusement abroad, while my fellow-citizens were fighting for liberty at home. While I was on my way back to Rome, some merchants informed me that the English Jesuits had formed a plot against me if I returned to Rome, because I had spoken too freely on religion; for it was a rule which I laid down to myself in those places, never to be the first to begin any conversation on religion; but if any questions were put to me concerning my faith, to declare it without any reserve or fear. I, nevertheless, returned to Rome. I took no steps to conceal either my person or my character; and for about the space of two months I again openly defended, as I had done before, the reformed religion in the very metropolis of popery. By the favour of God, I got safe back to Florence, where I was received with as much affection as if I had returned to my native country. There I stopped as many months as I had done before, except that I made an excursion for a few days to Lucca; and, crossing the Apennines, passed through Bologna and Ferrara to Venice. After I had spent a month in surveying the curiosities of this city, and had put on board a ship the books which I had collected in Italy, I proceeded through Verona and Milan, and along the Leman lake to Geneva. The mention of this city brings to my recollection the slandering More, and makes me again call the Deity to witness, that in all those places in which vice meets with so little discouragement, and is practised with so little shame, I never once deviated from the paths of integrity and virtue, and perpetually reflected that, though my conduct might escape the notice of men, it could not elude the inspection of God. At Geneva I held daily conferences with John Deodati, the learned professor of Theology. Then

pursuing my former route through France, I returned to my native country, after an absence of one year and about three months; at the time when Charles, having broken the peace, was renewing what is called the episcopal war with the Scots, in which the royalists being routed in the first encounter, and the English being universally and justly disaffected, the necessity of his affairs at last obliged him to convene a Parliament.—*Second Defence of the English People.*

ENGLAND (1640–1649)

SCHOOL TEACHING—EDWARD PHILLIPS' ACCOUNT. Soon after his return, and visits paid to his father and other friends, he took him a lodging in St. Bride's Churchyard, at the house of one Russel, a tailor, where he first undertook the education and instruction of his sister's two sons, the younger whereof had been wholly committed to his charge and care.

And here by the way, I judge it not impertinent to mention the many authors both of the Latin and Greek, which through his excellent judgment and way of teaching, far above the pedantry of common public schools (where such authors are scarce ever heard of), were run over within no greater compass of time, than from ten to fifteen or sixteen years of age. Of the Latin, the four grand authors *De Re Rustica,* Cato, Varro, Columella and Palladius; Cornelius Celsus, an ancient physician of the Romans; a great part of Pliny's *Natural History;* Vitruvius his *Architecture;* Frontinus his *Stratagems;* with the two egregious poets, Lucretius and Manilius. Of the Greek, Hesiod, a poet equal with Homer; Aratus his

Phaenomena, and *Diosemeia;* Dionysius Afer *De Situ Orbis;* Oppian's *Cynegetics* and *Halieutics;* Quintus Calaber his *Poem of the Trojan War* continued from Homer; Apollonius Rhodius his *Argonautics:* and in prose, Plutarch's *Placita Philosophorum,* and περὶ παιδῶν Ἀγωγίας; Geminus's *Astronomy;* Xenophon's *Cyri Institutio,* and *Anabasis;* Ælian's *Tactics;* and Polyaenus his *Warlike Stratagems.* Thus by teaching, he in some measure increased his own knowledge, having the reading of all these authors as it were by proxy; and all this might possibly have conduced to the preserving of his eyesight, had he not moreover been perpetually busied in his own laborious undertakings of the book and pen.

Nor did the time thus studiously employed in conquering the Greek and Latin tongues hinder the attaining to the chief oriental languages, *viz.,* the Hebrew, Chaldee, and Syriac, so far as to go through the *Pentateuch,* or Five Books of Moses in Hebrew, to make a good entrance into the *Targum,* or Chaldee Paraphrase, and to understand several chapters of St. Matthew in the Syriac Testament: besides an introduction into several arts and sciences, by reading Urstisius his *Arithmetic,* Riff's *Geometry,* Petiscus his *Trigonometry,* Joannes de Sacro Bosco *De Sphæra;* and into the Italian and French tongues, by reading in Italian Giovan Villani's *History of the Transactions between several petty States of Italy;* and in French a great part of Pierre Davity, the famous geographer of France in his time.

The Sunday's work was, for the most part, the reading each day a chapter of the Greek Testament, and hearing his learned exposition upon the same (and how this savored of atheism in him, I leave to the courteous backbiter

to judge). The next work after this, was the writing from his own dictation, some part, from time to time, of a tractate which he thought fit to collect from the ablest of divines who had written of that subject: Amesius, Wollebius, &c., *viz., A Perfect System of Divinity,* of which more hereafter.—*Life of Milton.*

MARRIAGE—TWO VERSIONS. During the time also of his continuance in this house [in Aldersgate Street], there fell out several occasions of the increasing of his family. His father, who till the taking of Reading by the Earl of Essex his forces, had lived with his other son at his house there, was upon that son's dissettlement necessitated to betake himself to this his eldest son, with whom he lived for some years, even to his dying day. In the next place he had an addition of some scholars; to which may be added, his entering into matrimony; but he had his wife's company so small a time, that he may well be said to have become a single man again soon after.

About Whitsuntide it was, or a little after, that he took a journey into the country; nobody about him certainly knowing the reason, or that it was any more than a journey of recreation; after a month's stay, home he returns a married man, that went out a bachelor; his wife being Mary, the eldest daughter of Mr. Richard Powell, then a justice of peace, of Forest Hill, near Shotover in Oxfordshire; some few of her nearest relations accompanying the bride to her new habitation; which by reason the father nor any body else were yet come, was able to receive them; where the feasting held for some days in celebration of the nuptials, and for entertainment of the bride's friends. At length they took their leave, and returning to Forest Hill, left the sister behind; probably not much

to her satisfaction, as appeared by the sequel. By that time she had for a month or thereabout led a philosophical life (after having been used to a great house, and much company and joviality), her friends, possibly incited by her own desire, made earnest suit by letter, to have her company the remaining part of the summer, which was granted, on condition of her return at the time appointed, Michaelmas, or thereabout. In the meantime came his father, and some of the forementioned disciples.

And now the studies went on with so much the more vigor, as there were more hands and heads employed; the old gentleman living wholly retired to his rest and devotion, without the least trouble imaginable. Our author, now as it were a single man again, made it his chief diversion now and then in an evening, to visit the lady Margaret Lee, daughter to the —— Lee, Earl of Marlborough, Lord High Treasurer of England, and President of the Privy Council, to King James the First. This lady being a woman of great wit and ingenuity, had a particular honor for him, and took much delight in his company, as likewise her husband Captain Hobson, a very accomplished gentleman; and what esteem he at the same time had for her, appears by a sonnet he made in praise of her, to be seen among his other *Sonnets* in his extant *Poems*.

Michaelmas being come, and no news of his wife's return, he sent for her by letter; and receiving no answer, sent several other letters, which were also unanswered; so that at last he dispatched down a foot messenger with a letter, desiring her return. But the messenger came back not only without an answer, at least a satisfactory one, but to the best of my remembrance, reported that

he was dismissed with some sort of contempt. This proceeding, in all probability, was grounded upon no other cause but this, namely, that the family being generally addicted to the cavalier party, as they called it, and some of them possibly engaged in the King's service, who by this time had his headquarters at Oxford, and was in some prospect of success, they began to repent them of having matched the eldest daughter of the family to a person so contrary to them in opinion; and thought it would be a blot in their escutcheon, whenever that court should come to flourish again.

However, it so incensed our author, that he thought it would be dishonorable ever to receive her again, after such a repulse; so that he forthwith prepared to fortify himself with arguments for such a resolution, and accordingly wrote two treatises, by which he undertook to maintain, that it was against reason, and the enjoinment of it not provable by Scripture, for any married couple disagreeable in humor and temper, or having an aversion to each other, to be forced to live yoked together all their days. The first was, his *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce;* of which there was printed a second edition, with some additions. The other in prosecution of the first, was styled *Tetrachordon.* Then the better to confirm his own opinion by the attestation of others, he set out a piece called *The Judgment of Martin Bucer,* a protestant minister, being a translation, out of that reverend divine, of some part of his works, exactly agreeing with him in sentiment. Lastly, he wrote in answer to a pragmatical clerk, who would needs give himself the honor of writing against so great a man, his *Colasterion,* or *Rod of Correction for a Saucy Impertinent.*

Not very long after the setting forth of these treatises, having application made to him by several gentlemen of his acquaintance for the education of their sons, as understanding haply the progress he had infixed by his first undertakings of that nature, he laid out for a larger house, and soon found it out.

But in the interim before he removed, there fell out a passage, which though it altered not the whole course he was going to steer, yet it put a stop or rather an end to a grand affair, which was more than probably thought to be then in agitation; it was indeed a design of marrying one of Dr. Davis's daughters, a very handsome and witty gentlewoman, but averse, as it is said, to this motion. However, the intelligence hereof, and the then declining state of the King's cause, and consequently of the circumstances of Justice Powell's family, caused them to set all engines on work, to restore the late married woman to the station wherein they a little before had planted her. At last this device was pitched upon. There dwelt in the lane of St. Martin's-le-Grand, which was hard by, a relation of our author's, one Blackborough, whom it was known he often visited, and upon this occasion the visits were the more narrowly observed and possibly there might be a combination between both parties; the friends on both sides concentring in the same action, though on different behalfs. One time above the rest, he making his usual visit, the wife was ready in another room, and on a sudden he was surprised to see one whom he thought to have never seen more, making submission and begging pardon on her knees before him. He might probably at first make some show of aversion and rejection; but partly his own generous nature, more inclinable to recon-

ciliation than to perseverance in anger and revenge, and partly the strong intercession of friends on both sides, soon brought him to an act of oblivion, and a firm league of peace for the future; and it was at length concluded, that she should remain at a friend's house, till such time as he was settled in his new house at Barbican, and all things for her reception in order; the place agreed on for her present abode, was the widow Webber's house in St. Clement's Church-yard, whose second daughter had been married to the other brother many years before. The first fruits of her return to her husband was a brave girl, born within a year after; though, whether by ill constitution or want of care, she grew more and more decrepit.

But it was not only by children that she increased the number of the family; for in no very long time after her coming, she had a great resort of her kindred with her in the house, *viz.* her father and mother, and several of her brothers and sisters, which were in all pretty numerous; who upon his father's sickening and dying soon after, went away.—*Phillips' Life of Milton.*

In this while, his manner of settlement fitting him for the reception of a wife, he in a month's time (according to his practice of not wasting that precious talent) courted, married, and brought home from Forresthall,[7] near Oxford, a daughter of Mr. Powell. But she, that was very young, and had been bred in a family of plenty and freedom, being not well pleased with his reserved manner of life, within a few days left him, and went back into the country with her mother. Nor though he sent several pressing invitations could he prevail with her to return,

[7] Error for Forest Hill.

till about four years after, when Oxford was surrendered (the nighness of her father's house to that garrison having for the most part of the meantime hindered any communication between them), she of her own accord came, and submitted to him, pleading that her mother had been the inciter of her to that frowardness. He, in the interval, who had entered into that state for the end designed by God and nature, and was then in the full vigor of his manhood, could ill bear the disappointment he met with by her obstinate absenting; and, therefore, thought upon a divorce, that he might be free to marry another; concerning which he also was in treaty. The lawfulness and expedience of this, duly regulate in order to all those purposes for which marriage was at first instituted, had upon full consideration and reading good authors been formerly his opinion; and the necessity of justifying himself now concurring with the opportunity, acceptable to him, of instructing others in a point of so great concern to the peace and preservation of families, and so likely to prevent temptations as well as mischiefs, he first writ *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce,* then *Colasterion,* and after *Tetrachordon.* In these he taught the right use and design of marriage; then the original and practice of divorces amongst the Jews, and showed that our Saviour, in those four places of the Evangelists, meant not the abrogating but rectifying the abuses of it; rendering to that purpose another sense of the word fornication (and which is also the opinion amongst others of Mr. Selden in his *Uxor Hebraea*) than what is commonly received. Martin Bucer's *Judgment* in this matter he likewise translated into English. The Assembly of Divines then sitting at Westminster, though formerly obliged by his learned pen in the

defense of Smectymnuus, and other their controversies with the bishops, now impatient of having the clergies' jurisdiction, as they reckoned it, invaded, instead of answering, or disproving what those books had asserted, caused him to be summoned for them before the Lords. But that house, whether approving the doctrine, or not favoring his accusers, soon dismissed him.—*Anonymous Life of Milton.*

LITERARY ACTIVITY—MILTON'S STATEMENT. As soon as I was able, I hired a spacious house in the city for myself and my books; where I again with rapture renewed my literary pursuits, and where I calmly awaited the issue of the contest, which I trusted to the wise conduct of Providence, and to the courage of the people. The vigour of the Parliament had begun to humble the pride of the bishops. As long as the liberty of speech was no longer subject to control, all mouths began to be opened against the bishops; some complained of the vices of the individuals, other of those of the order. They said that it was unjust that they alone should differ from the model of other reformed churches; that the government of the Church should be according to the pattern of other churches, and particularly the Word of God. This awakened all my attention and my zeal. I saw that a way was opening for the establishment of real liberty; that the foundation was laying for the deliverance of man from the yoke of slavery and superstition; that the principles of religion, which were the first objects of our care, would exert a salutary influence on the manners and constitution of the republic; and as I had from my youth studied the distinctions between religious and civil rights, I perceived that if I ever wished to be of use, I ought at least not to

be wanting to my country, to the Church, and to so many of my fellow-Christians, in a crisis of so much danger; I therefore determined to relinquish the other pursuits in which I was engaged, and to transfer the whole force of my talents and my industry to this one important object. I accordingly wrote two books to a friend concerning the reformation of the Church of England. Afterwards, when two bishops of superior distinction vindicated their privileges against some principal ministers, I thought that on those topics, to the consideration of which I was led solely by my love of truth, and my reverence for Christianity, I should not probably write worse than those who were contending only for their own emoluments and usurpations. I therefore answered the one in two books, of which the first is inscribed, "Concerning Prelatical Episcopacy" and the other "Concerning the Mode of Ecclesiastical Government"; and I replied to the other in some "Animadversions," and soon after in an "Apology." On this occasion it was supposed that I brought a timely succour to the ministers, who were hardly a match for the eloquence of their opponents; and from that time I was actively employed in refuting any answers that appeared. When the bishops could no longer resist the multitude of their assailants, I had leisure to turn my thoughts to other subjects; to the promotion of real and substantial liberty; which is rather to be sought from within than from without; and whose existence depends, not so much on the terror of the sword, as on sobriety of conduct and integrity of life. When, therefore, I perceived that there were three species of liberty which are essential to the happiness of social life—religious, domestic, and civil; and as I had already written concerning the first, and the magistrates were

strenuously active in obtaining the third, I determined to turn my attention to the second, or the domestic species. As this seemed to involve three material questions, the conditions of the conjugal tie, the education of the children, and the free publication of the thoughts, I made them objects of distinct consideration. I explained my sentiments, not only concerning the solemnisation of the marriage, but the dissolution, if circumstances rendered it necessary; and I drew my arguments from the divine law, which Christ did not abolish, or publish another more grievous than that of Moses. I stated my own opinions, and those of others, concerning the exclusive exception of fornication, which our illustrious Selden has since, in his *Hebrew Wife,* more copiously discussed; for he in vain makes a vaunt of liberty in the senate or in the forum, who languishes under the vilest servitude, to an inferior at home. On this subject, therefore, I published some books which were more particularly necessary at that time, when man and wife were often the most inveterate foes, when the man often stayed to take care of his children at home, while the mother of the family was seen in the camp of the enemy, threatening death and destruction to her husband. I then discussed the principles of education in a summary manner, but sufficiently copious for those who attend seriously to the subject; than which nothing can be more necessary to principle the minds of men in virtue, the only genuine source of political and individual liberty, the only true safeguard of states, the bulwark of their prosperity and renown. Lastly, I wrote my "Areopagitica," in order to deliver the press from the restraints with which it was encumbered; that the power of determining what was true and what was false, what ought to be published

and what to be suppressed, might no longer be entrusted to a few illiterate and illiberal individuals, who refused their sanction to any work which contained views or sentiments at all above the level of the vulgar superstition. On the last species of civil liberty, I said nothing, because I saw that sufficient attention was paid to it by the magistrates; nor did I write anything on the prerogative of the crown, till the king, voted an enemy by the Parliament, and vanquished in the field, was summoned before the tribunal which condemned him to lose his head. But when, at length, some Presbyterian ministers, who had formerly been the most bitter enemies to Charles, became jealous of the growth of the Independents, and of their ascendency in the Parliament, most tumultuously clamoured against the sentence, and did all in their power to prevent the execution, though they were not angry, so much on account of the act itself, as because it was not the act of their party; and when they dared to affirm, that the doctrine of the Protestants, and of all the reformed churches, was abhorrent to such an atrocious proceeding against kings; I thought that it became me to oppose such a glaring falsehood; and accordingly, without any immediate or personal application to Charles, I showed, in an abstract consideration of the question, what might lawfully be done against tyrants; and in support of what I advanced, produced the opinions of the most celebrated divines; while I vehemently inveighed against the egregious ignorance or effrontery of men, who professed better things, and from whom better things might have been expected. That book did not make its appearance till after the death of Charles; and was written rather to reconcile the minds of the people to the event, than to discuss

the legitimacy of that particular sentence which concerned the magistrates, and which was already executed. Such were the fruits of my private studies, which I gratuitously presented to the Church and to the State; and for which I was recompensed by nothing but impunity; though the actions themselves procured me peace of conscience, and the approbation of the good; while I exercised that freedom of discussion which I loved. Others, without labour or desert, got possession of honours and emoluments; but no one ever knew me either soliciting anything myself or through the medium of my friends, ever beheld me in a supplicating posture at the doors of the senate, or the levees of the great. I usually kept myself secluded at home, where my own property, part of which had been withheld during the civil commotions, and part of which had been absorbed in the oppressive contributions which I had to sustain, afforded me a scanty subsistence. When I was released from these engagements, and thought that I was about to enjoy an interval of uninterrupted ease, I turned my thoughts to a continued history of my country, from the earliest times to the present period. I had already finished four books, when, after the subversion of the monarchy, and the establishment of a republic, I was surprised by an invitation from the Council of State, who desired my services in the office for foreign affairs.—*Second Defence of the English People.*

LATIN SECRETARYSHIP (1649–1660)

MILTON'S STATEMENT. A book appeared soon after, which was ascribed to the king, and contained the most invidious charges against the Parliament. I was ordered

to answer it; and opposed the Iconoclast to his Icon. I did not insult over fallen majesty, as is pretended; I only preferred Queen Truth to King Charles. The charge of insult, which I saw that the malevolent would urge, I was at some pains to remove in the beginning of the work; and as often as possible in other places. Salmasius then appeared, to whom they were not, as More says, long in looking about for an opponent, but immediately appointed me, who happened at the time to be present in the Council. —*Second Defence of the English People.*

EDWARD PHILLIPS'ACCOUNT. When (for this his last treatise [i. e. *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*], reviving the fame of other things he had formerly published) being more and more taken notice of for his excellency of style, and depth of judgment, he was courted into the service of this new commonwealth, and at last prevailed with (for he never hunted after preferment, nor affected the tintamar and hurry of public business) to take upon him the office of Latin secretary to the Council of State for all their letters to foreign princes and states; for they stuck to this noble and generous resolution, not to write to any, or receive answers from them, but in a language most proper to maintain a correspondence among the learned of all nations in this part of the world; scorning to carry on their affairs in the wheedling, lisping jargon of the cringing French, especially having a minister of state able to cope with the ablest any prince or state could employ, for the Latin tongue. And so well he acquitted himself in this station, that he gained from abroad both reputation to himself, and credit to the state that employed him.

And it was well the business of his office came not

very fast upon him; for he was scarce well warm in his secretaryship before other work flowed in upon him, which took him up for some considerable time. In the first place there came out a book said to have been written by the king, and finished a little before his death, intituled εἰκὼν βασιλική, that is, *The Royal Image;* a book highly cried up for its smooth style, and pathetical composure; wherefore to obviate the impression it was like to make among the many, he was obliged to write an answer, which he intituled εἰκονοκλάστης or *Image-Breaker.*

And upon the heels of that, out comes in public the great kill-cow of Christendom, with his *Defensio Regis contra Populum Anglicanum;* a man so famous and cried up for his Plinian Exercitations, and other pieces of reputed learning, that there could no where have been found a champion that durst lift up the pen against so formidable an adversary, had not our little English David had the courage to undertake this great French Goliath. To whom he gave such a hit in the forehead, that he presently staggered, and soon after fell. For immediately upon the coming out of the answer, intituled, *Defensio Populi Anglicani contra Claudium Anonymum,* &c. he that till then had been chief minister and superintendent in the court of the learned Christina, Queen of Sweden, dwindled in esteem to that degree, that he at last vouchsafed to speak to the meanest servant. In short, he was dismissed with so cold and slighting an adieu, that after a faint dying reply, he was glad to have recourse to death, the remedy of evils, and ender of controversies.

And now I presume our author had some breathing space, but it was not long. For though Salmasius was departed, he left some stings behind; new enemies started

up, barkers, though no great biters. Who the first asserter of Salmasius his cause was, is not certainly known, but variously conjectured at, some supposing it to be one Janus, a lawyer of Gray's Inn, some Dr. Bramhal, made by King Charles the Second, after his restoration, Archbishop of Armagh in Ireland; but whoever the author was, the book was thought fit to be taken into correction; and our author not thinking it worth his own undertaking, to the disturbing the progress of whatever more chosen work he had then in hands, committed this task to the youngest of his nephews; but with such exact amendations before it went to the press, that it might have very well passed for his, but that he was willing the person that took the pains to prepare it for his examination and polishment, should have the name and credit of being the author; so that it came forth under this title, *Joannis Miltonii Angli Defensio pro Populo Anglicano contra,* &c.

During the writing and publishing of this book, he lodged at one Thomson's next door to the Bull-head tavern at Charing-Cross, opening into the Spring-Garden; which seems to have been only a lodging taken till his designed apartment in Scotland-Yard was prepared for him. For hither he soon removed from the aforesaid place; and here his third child, a son, was born, which through the ill usage, or bad constitution, of an ill-chosen nurse, died an infant.

From this apartment, whether he thought it not healthy, or otherwise convenient for his use, or whatever else was the reason, he soon after took a pretty garden-house in Petty-France in Westminster, next door to the Lord Scudamore's, and opening into St. James's Park. Here he remained no less than eight years, namely, from the

year 1652, till within a few weeks of King Charles the Second's restoration.

In this house his first wife dying in childbed, he married a second, who after a year's time died in childbed also. This second marriage was about two or three years after his being wholly deprived of sight, which was just going about the time of his answering Salmasius; whereupon his adversaries gladly take occasion of imputing his blindness as a judgment upon him for his answering the King's book, &c. whereas it is most certainly known, that his sight, what with his continual study, his being subject to the headache, and his perpetual tampering with physic to preserve it, had been decaying for above a dozen years before, and the sight of one [eye] for a long time clearly lost. Here he wrote, by his amanuensis, his two *Answers to Alexander More,* who upon the last answer quitted the field.—*Life of Milton.*

FROM THE ANONYMOUS BIOGRAPHER. While he was thus employed his eyesight totally failed him; not through any immediate or sudden judgment, as his adversaries insultingly affirmed, but from a weakness which his hard, nightly study in his youth had first occasioned, and which by degrees had for some time before deprived him of the use of one eye. And the issues and seatons, made use of to save or retrieve that, were thought by drawing away the spirits, which should have supplied the optic vessels, to have hastened the loss of the other. He was, indeed, advised by his physicians of the danger, in his condition, attending so great intentness as that work required. But he, who was resolute in going through with what upon good consideration he at any time designed, and to whom

the love of truth and his country was dearer than all things, would not for any danger decline their defense.

Nor did his darkness discourage or disable him from prosecuting, with the help of amanuenses, the former design of his calmer studies.—*Anonymous Life of Milton.*

RETIREMENT, THE GREAT POEMS, LAST YEARS (1660-1674)

EDWARD PHILLIPS' ACCOUNT. So that being now quiet from state adversaries and public contests, he had leisure again for his own studies and private designs; which were his foresaid *History of England*; and a new *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae,* according to the manner of Stephanus, a work he had been long since collecting from his own reading, and still went on with it at times, even very near to his dying day; but the papers after his death were so discomposed and deficient that it could not be made fit for the press; however, what there was of it, was made use of for another dictionary.

But the height of his noble fancy and invention began now to be seriously and mainly employed in a subject worthy of such a Muse, *viz.* a heroic poem, entitled, *Paradise Lost;* the noblest in the general esteem of learned and judicious persons, of any yet written by any either ancient or modern. This subject was first designed a tragedy, and in the fourth book of the poem there are six verses, which several years before the poem was begun, were shown to me and some others, as designed for the very beginning of the said tragedy. The verses are these:

> O thou that with surpassing glory crown'd!
> Look'st from thy sole dominion, like the god

Of this new world; at whose sight all the stars
Hide their diminish'd heads; to thee I call,
But with no friendly voice; and add thy name,
O Sun! to tell thee how I hate thy beams
That bring to my remembrance, from what state
I fell, how glorious once above thy sphere;
Till pride and worse ambition threw me down,
Warring in Heaven, against Heaven's glorious King.

There is another very remarkable passage in the composure of this poem, which I have a particular occasion to remember; for whereas I had the perusal of it from the very beginning, for some years, as I went from time to time to visit him, in a parcel of ten, twenty, or thirty verses at a time, which being written by whatever hand came next, might possibly want correction as to the orthography and pointing; having as the summer came on, not been showed any for a considerable while, and, desiring the reason thereof, was answered: that his vein never happily flowed but from the autumnal equinoctial to the vernal, and that whatever he attempted [otherwise] was never to his satisfaction, though he courted his fancy never so much, so that in all the years he was about this poem, he may be said to have spent but half his time therein.

It was but a little before the King's restoration that he wrote and published his book *In Defence of a Commonwealth;* so undaunted he was in declaring his true sentiments to the world; and not long before, his *Power of the Civil Magistrate in Ecclesiastical Affairs,* and his *Treatise against Hirelings,* just upon the King's coming over; having a little before been sequestered from his office of Latin secretary, and the salary thereunto belonging.

He was forced to leave his house also in Petty-France, where all the time of his abode there, which was eight years, as above-mentioned, he was frequently visited by persons of quality, particularly my Lady Ranalagh, whose son for some time he instructed; all learned foreigners of note, who could not part out of the city, without giving a visit to a person so eminent; and lastly, by particular friends that had a high esteem for him, *viz.* Mr. Andrew Marvel, young Lawrence (the son of him that was president of Oliver's council), to whom there is a sonnet among the rest, in his printed *Poems;* Mr. Marchamont Needham, the writer of *Politicus;* but above all, Mr. Cyriack Skinner whom he honored with two sonnets, one long since public among his *Poems,* the other but newly printed.

His next removal was, by the advice of those that wished him well, and had a concern for his preservation, into a place of retirement and abscondence, till such time as the current of affairs for the future should instruct him what farther course to take. It was a friend's house in Bartholomew Close, where he lived till the act of oblivion came forth; which it pleased God, proved as favorable to him as could be hoped or expected, through the intercession of some that stood his friends both in Council and Parliament; particularly in the House of Commons, Mr. Andrew Marvel, a member for Hull, acted vigorously in his behalf, and made a considerable party for him; so that, together with John Goodwin of Coleman Street, he was only so far excepted as not to bear any office in the Commonwealth.

Soon after appearing again in public, he took a house in Holborn near Red Lyon Fields; where he stayed not long, before his pardon having passed the seal, he removed

to Jewin Street. There he lived when he married his 3d wife, recommended to him by his old friend Dr. Paget in Coleman Street.

But he stayed not long after his new marriage, ere he removed to a house in the Artillery-walk leading to Bunhill Fields. And this was his last stage in this world, but it was of many years continuance, more perhaps than he had had in any other place besides.

Here he finished his noble poem, and published it in the year 1666. The first edition was printed in quarto by one Simons, a printer in Aldersgate Street; the other in a large octavo, by Starky near Temple-Bar, amended, enlarged, and differently disposed as to the number of books by his own hand, that is by his own appointment; the last set forth, many years since his death, in a large folio, with cuts added, by Jacob Tonson.

Here it was also that he finished and published his history of our nation till the Conquest, all complete so far as he went, some passages only excepted; which, being thought too sharp against the clergy, could not pass the hand of the licenser, were in the hands of the late Earl of Anglesey while he lived; where at present is uncertain.

It cannot be concluded when he wrote his excellent tragedy entitled *Samson Agonistes,* but sure enough it is that it came forth after his publication of *Paradise Lost,* together with his other poem called *Paradise Regained,* which doubtless was begun and finished and printed after the other was published, and that in a wonderful short space considering the sublimeness of it; however, it is generally censured to be much inferior to the other, though he could not hear with patience any such thing when related to him. Possibly the subject may not afford such

variety of invention; but it is thought by the most judicious to be be little or nothing inferior to the other for style and decorum.

The said Earl of Anglesey, whom he presented with a copy of the unlicensed papers of his history, came often here to visit him, as very much coveting his society and converse; as likewise others of the nobility, and many persons of eminent quality; nor were the visits of foreigners ever more frequent than in this place, almost to his dying day.

His treatise *Of True Religion, Heresy, Schism and Toleration,* &c. was doubtless the last thing of his writing that was published before his death. He had, as I remember, prepared for the press an answer to some little scribing quack in London, who had written a scurrilous libel against him; but whether by the dissuasion of friends, as thinking him a fellow not worth his notice, or for what other cause I know not, this answer was never published.

He died in the year 1673,[7] towards the latter end of the summer, and had a very decent interment according to his quality, in the church of St. Giles, Cripplegate, being attended from his house to the church by several gentlemen then in town, his principal well-wishers and admirers. —*Life of Milton.*

FROM A LATIN LETTER TO PETER HEIMBACH. AUG. 15, 1666. It is not strange, as you write, that report should have induced you to believe that I had perished among the numbers of my countrymen who fell in a year so fatally visited by the ravages of the plague. If that

[7] Error for 1674.

rumor sprung, as it seems, out of solicitude for my safety, I consider it as no unpleasing indication of the esteem in which I am held among you. But by the goodness of God, who provided for me a place of refuge in the country, I yet enjoy both life and health; which so long as they continue I shall be happy to employ in any useful undertaking. It gives me pleasure to think that, after so long an interval, I have again occurred to your remembrance; though, owing to the luxuriance of your praise, you seem almost to lead me to suspect that you had quite forgotten one in whom you say that you admire the union of so many virtues; from such a union I might dread too numerous a progeny, if it were not evident that the virtues flourish most in penury and distress. But one of those virtues has made me but an ill return for her hospitable reception in my breast; for what you term policy, which I wish that you had rather called patriotic piety, has, if I may so say, almost left me, who was charmed with so sweet a sound, without a country. The other virtues harmoniously agree. Our country is wherever we are well off. I will conclude after first begging you if there be any errors in the diction or the punctuation, to impute it to the boy who wrote this, who is quite ignorant of Latin, and to whom I was, with no little vexation, obliged to dictate not the words, but, one by one, the letters of which they were composed.

CONTEMPORARY TESTIMONY AS TO MILTON'S PERSONALITY, HABITS, ETC.

ITEMS FROM AUBREY. His harmonical and ingenious soul did lodge in a beautiful and well-proportioned body.

In toto nusquam corpore menda fuit.

Ovid.

He had a very good memory; but I believe that his excellent method of thinking and disposing did much to help his memory.

Of a very cheerful humor. He would be cheerful even in his gout-fits, and sing.

Seldom took any physic, only sometimes he took manna.

He was very healthy, and free from all diseases, only toward his later end, he was visited with the gout, spring and fall. . . .

He was an early riser, scil, at 4 o'clock manè, yea, after he lost his sight. He had a man read to him. The first thing he read was the Hebrew Bible, and that was at 4h. manè ½ *h.*+ Then he contemplated. At 7 his man came to him again, and then read to him and wrote till dinner; the writing was as much as the reading. His 2d daughter, Deborah, could read to him Latin, Italian and French, and Greek. [She] married in Dublin to one Mr. Clarke (sells silk etc); very like her father. The other sister is Mary, more like her mother. After dinner he used to walk 3 or 4 hours at a time (he always had a garden where he lived): went to bed about 9. Temperate man, rarely drank between meals. Extreme pleasant in his conversation, and at dinner, supper, &c. but satirical. . . .

He pronounced the letter R very hard (*littera canina*). A certain sign of a satirical wit. From John Dryden. . . .

He had a delicate, tuneable voice, and had good skill. His father instructed him. He had an organ in his house; he played on that most. . . .

He was visited much by learned [men], more than he did desire. . . .

As he was severe on one hand, so he was most familiar and free in his conversation to those to whom most sour in his way of education. N. B. He made his nephews songsters, and sing, from the time they were with him. . . .

From Mr. E. Phillips:—All the time of writing his *Paradise Lost,* his vein began at the autumnal equinoctial, and ceased at the vernal, (or thereabouts, I believe about May), and this was 4 or 5 years of his doing it. He began about 2 years before the King came in, and finished about 3 years after the King's restoration.—*Collections for the Life of Milton.*

FROM EDWARD PHILLIPS. And those [children] he had by the first [wife] he made serviceable to him in that very particular in which he most wanted their service, and supplied his want of eyesight by their eyes and tongue. For though he had daily about him one or other to read to him; some persons of man's estate, who of their own accord greedily catched at the opportunity of being his readers, that they might as well reap the benefit of what they read to him, as oblige him by the benefit of their reading; others of younger years sent by their parents to the same end; yet, excusing only the eldest daughter by reason of her bodily infirmity and difficult utterance of speech (which to say the truth I doubt was the principal cause of excusing her), the other two were condemned to the performance of reading, and exactly pronouncing of all the languages of whatever book he should at one time or other think fit to peruse; *viz.* the Hebrew (and I think the Syriac), the Greek, the Latin, the Italian, Spanish, and French. All which sorts of books to be confined to read, without understanding one word, must needs be a trial of patience almost beyond endurance; yet

it was endured by both for a long time. Yet the irksomeness of this employment could not be always concealed, but broke out more and more into expressions of uneasiness; so that at length they were all (even the eldest also) sent out to learn some curious and ingenious sorts of manufacture, that are proper for women to learn, particularly embroideries in gold or silver. It had been happy indeed, if the daughters of such a person had been made in some measure inheritrixes of their father's learning; but since fate otherwise decreed, the greatest honor that can be ascribed to this now living (and so would have been to the others, had they lived) is to be daughter to a man of his extraordinary character.—*Life of Milton.*

FROM THE ANONYMOUS BIOGRAPHER. He had naturally a sharp wit, and steady judgment; which helps toward attaining learning he improved by an indefatigable attention to his study; and was supported in that by a temperance, always observed by him, but in his youth even with great nicety. Yet did he not reckon this talent but as entrusted with him; and therefore dedicated all his labors to the glory of God and some public good; neither binding himself to any of the gainful professions, nor having any worldly interest for aim in what he taught.

He was of a moderate stature, and well proportioned, of a ruddy complexion, light brown hair, and handsome features; save that his eyes were none of the quickest. But his blindness, which proceeded from a gutta serena, added no further blemish to them. His deportment was sweet and affable; and his gait erect and manly, bespeaking courage and undauntedness (or a *nil conscire*), on which account he wore a sword while he had his sight, and was skilled in using it. He had an excellent ear, and

could bear a part both in vocal and instrumental music.

He rendered his studies and various works more easy and pleasant by allotting them their several portions of the day. Of these the time friendly to the Muses fell to his poetry; and he, waking early, (as is the use of temperate men) had commonly a good stock of verses ready against his amanuensis came; which if it happened to be later then ordinary, he would complain, saying *he wanted to be milked.* The evenings he likewise spent in reading some choice poets, by way of refreshment after the day's toil, and to store his fancy against morning. Besides his ordinary lectures out of the Bible and the best commentators on the week day, that was his sole subject on Sundays. And David's Psalms were in esteem with him above all poetry. The youths that he instructed from time to time served him often as amanuenses, and some elderly persons were glad for the benefit of his learned conversation, to perform that office. His first wife died a while after his blindness seized him, leaving him three daughters, that lived to be women. He married two more, whereof one survived him. He died in a fit of the gout, but with so little pain or emotion, that the tide of his expiring was not perceived by those in the room. And though he had been long troubled with that disease, insomuch that his knuckles were all callous, yet was he not ever observed to be very impatient. He had this elegy in common with the patriarchs and kings of Israel, that he was gathered to his people; for he happened to be buried in Cripplegate, where about thirty years before he had by chance also interred his father.—*Anonymous Life of Milton.*

FROM JONATHAN RICHARDSON. I have heard many years since that he used to sit in a grey coarse cloth coat at the door of his house, near Bunhill Fields, without Moorgate, in warm, sunny weather, to enjoy the fresh air, and so, as well as in his room, received the visits of people of distinguished parts, as well as quality; and very lately I had the good fortune to have another picture of him from an aged clergyman in Dorsetshire, Dr. Wright. He found him in a small house, he thinks but one room on a floor. In that, up one pair of stairs, which was hung with a rusty green, he found John Milton, sitting in an elbow chair, black clothes, and neat enough, pale but not cadaverous, his hands and fingers gouty and with chalk-stones. Among other discourse he expressed himself to this purpose: that, was he free from the pain this gave him, his blindness would be tolerable. . . .

In relation to his love of music and the effect it had upon his mind I remember a story I had from a friend I was happy in for many years, and who loved to talk of Milton as he often did. Milton hearing a lady sing finely, "Now I swear," says he, "this lady is handsome." His ears now were eyes to him. . . .

Milton had a servant who was a very honest silly fellow, and a zealous and constant follower of those teachers [i. e. non-conformists]. When he came from the meeting, his master would frequently ask him what he had heard, and divert himself with ridiculing their fooleries, or, it may be, the poor fellow's understanding: both one and t'other probably. However, this was so grievous to the good creature that he left his service upon it.—*Life of Milton.*

FROM THE COURT PROCEEDINGS RELATIVE TO MILTON'S WILL.[9] That on, or about the twentieth day of July, 1674, the day certain he now remembreth not, this deponent being a practicer in the Law, and a Bencher in the Inner Temple, but living in vacations at Ipswich, did usually at the end of the Term visit John Milton, his this deponent's brother the Testator articulate, deceased, before his going home; and so at the end of Midsummer Term last past, he this deponent went to visit his said brother, and then found him in his chamber within his own house, situated on Bunhill within the parish of Saint Giles, Cripplegate, London. And at that time, he the said Testator, being not well, (and this deponent being then going into the country,) in a serious manner, with an intent, (as he believes,) that what he then spoke should be his will, if he died before his this deponent's coming the next time to London, declared his will in these very words as near as this deponent can now call to mind. Viz. "Brother, the portion due to me from Mr. Powell, my former first wife's father, I leave to the unkind children I had by her; but I have received no part of it, and my will and meaning is, they shall have no other benefit of my estate, than the said portion and what I have besides done for them; they having been very undutiful to me. And all the residue of my estate I leave to the disposal of Elizabeth my loving wife."—*Testimony of Christopher Milton.*

[9] Milton's nuncupative or verbal will leaving all his property to his wife was contested by his daughters, Mary, Anne, and Deborah. The quotations are from the sworn testimony of Milton's brother and his servant, who appeared as witnesses for the widow. See Todd (1809 edition), vol. I, pp. 165 ff. Though the will was held invalid on technical grounds there can be little doubt of the reliability of the evidence.

That this deponent was servant unto Mr. John Milton, the testator in this cause, deceased, for about a year before his death, who died upon a Sunday the fifteenth of November [10] last at night, and saith that on a day happening in the month of July last, the time more certainly she remembereth not, this deponent being then in the deceased's lodging chamber, he the said deceased, and the party producent in this cause his wife, being then also in the said chamber at dinner together, and the said Elizabeth Milton the party producent having provided something for the deceased's dinner which he very well liked, he the said deceased then spoke to his said wife these or the like words as near as this deponent can remember, *viz.* "God have mercy Betty, I see thou wilt perform according to thy promise in providing me such dishes as I think fit whilst I live, and when I die thou knowest that I have left thee all," there being nobody present in the said chamber with the said deceased and his wife but this deponent. And the said testator at that time was of perfect mind and memory, and talked and discoursed sensibly and well, but was then indisposed in his body by reason of the distemper of the gout, which he had then upon him. Further this deponent saith, that she hath several times heard the said deceased, since the time above deposed of, declare and say, that he had made provision for his children in his life-time, and had spent the greatest part of his estate in providing for them, and that he was resolved he would do no more for them living or dying. . . .

That this respondent hath heard the deceased declare his displeasure against the parties ministrant his children,

[10] Error for November 8.

and particularly the deceased declared to this respondent that, a little before he was married to Elizabeth Milton his now relict, a former maid servant of his told Mary one of the deceased's daughters and one of the ministrants, that she heard the deceased was to be married, to which the said Mary replied to the said maid servant, that that was no news to hear of his wedding, but if she could hear of his death that was something; and further told this respondent, that all his said children did combine together and counsel his maid servant to cheat him the deceased in her marketings, and that his said children had made away some of his books and would have sold the rest of his books to the dunghill women.—*Testimony of Elizabeth Fisher.*

CHAPTER II

THE PROSE WORKS

IT was not without reason that David Masson in his great biography of Milton felt compelled to narrate, beside the events of the poet's life, practically the whole political ecclesiastical and literary history of his times. Milton's career was not a private one and a full understanding of his character and activity involves the entire series of historical events and changes from the beginnings of the great rebellion to the death of the Puritan movement in the Restoration. There are also the religious, cultural, and scholarly aspects of his age to take account of, for Milton, more perhaps than any other English literary man, received into himself the full intellectual inheritance of his own day. The best way to envisage Milton as a public figure, interpreting and moulding great events and being profoundly influenced by them in turn, the best way, also, to arrive at a comprehension of his wide ranging intellectual activity, to follow his developing thought and ideals, to witness the play of his character in action, is to make a careful study of his voluminous prose works. It seems desirable, therefore, in this chapter to take a practically complete chronological survey of these writings, with a fuller statement than that given by Milton and his early biographers of the occasion and purport of each one.

Milton said that in writing prose he had the use, as it were, only of his left hand. But that left was a powerful one, whether in Latin or in English, and whenever he deals with matters of more than transitory significance (and it is characteristic of him to interpret particular issues at hand in accordance with large and enduring principles) his writings constitute a vital and permanent contribution to literature and thought. Many passages have in them all the intensity of Milton's personality. The temperamental and passionate qualities which belonged to him as a poet, while they often prevent him from taking a calm and judicious view of his subject, fire his eloquence and make his work a personal record of the highest interest. It is, of course, true that much of Milton's controversial writing has lost its appeal. We are no longer patient with the endless haggling over Scriptural and other authority which constitutes a large part of almost every seventeenth century pamphlet, nor do we share the savage joy of Milton's contemporaries as he heaps upon his opponents the language of ridicule and abuse. Yet even here we feel his power, and if we are to have a complete picture of the man in his environment we must envisage him in the fierceness of the open conflict to which his sense of duty drove him, as well as in the calm of study and contemplation which he affirms that he preferred.

ACADEMIC EXERCISES AND FAMILIAR LETTERS (1625–1666)

Milton's various rhetorical exercises, written in Latin for delivery on stated occasions in the college or university as a regular requirement of academic discipline, were preserved by him and published along with his per-

sonal Latin letters by Brabazon Aylmer in 1674 under the title *Johannis Miltoni Prolusiones quaedam Oratoriae.* These disputations or orations deal with such topics as "Whether day or night be the more excellent," "That occasional sportive exercises are not obstructive to philosophical studies," "That art is more conducive to human happiness than ignorance." They cover the entire period of Milton's residence at Cambridge from his sophomore year and constitute, in spite of their purely rhetorical character, an interesting record of a part of his intellectual activity as a student. Masson[1] discusses in detail the academic requirements under which they were composed, attempts to date the individual exercises, and translates the most significant portions of each. As a whole they have never been translated. They show, in the first place, that Milton was skilled beyond his fellows in the elegance and ingenuity of his performance of these duties, being already a master of literary expression in the Latin tongue. They are full of a sportive but not always felicitous humor; they reveal also a strong consciousness of superiority and the tendency, so characteristic of the later Milton, to make his own personality an issue in the controversy in which he is engaged. In the sixth exercise he alludes to the epithet "Lady" which had been applied to him and defends his ascetic way of life against the implications of his detractors, answering scorn for scorn. He shows himself already an adherent to the more progressive way of thought represented by Bacon and the humanists generally against the larger and more conservative group who still moved in the ruts of medieval scholasticism. This comes out in the second Prolusion, where

[1] *Life of Milton,* I, pp. 140 ff., 272 ff.

Plato is exalted above Aristotle, and in the third, which contains an attack on scholastic philosophy. It is equally evident in two academic pieces included among Milton's Latin poems. In one of these, *De Idea Platonica quemadmodum Aristoteles intellexit,* Milton delicately satirizes the hard-headed attitude which denies the real existence of the ideas because they cannot be seen and touched. His sympathies are evidently on the side of the more imaginative Platonic mode of thought. The other, entitled *Naturam non pati Senium,* attacks the disheartening and fatalistic theory of a necessary decay in nature. These verses are apparently the ones alluded to by Milton in a letter to Gill as written for a friend who was Respondent in the academic exercises of the commencement of 1628; they take the modernist side of an old debate which had just been revived by the publication of George Hakewell's *Apologie,* a work of importance in the scientific and intellectual movement of which Bacon was the prophet.[2]

Milton's personal letters (*Epistolae Familiares*), twenty-one in number, date from 1625 to 1666. The earlier ones are addressed to his two tutors, Young and Gill, and to his schoolboy friend, Charles Diodati. Most of those written after the Horton period were sent to various continental correspondents, with some of whom he had become acquainted on his Italian journey. Milton took pains to make these letters models of Latin epistolary art and published them as works of literature. In this respect he is following a tradition of the Renaissance humanists, who endeavored in their correspondence to imi-

[2] See Jones, *The Background of the Battle of the Books,* pp. 107 ff.

tate the elegance of Cicero's letters to Atticus and the members of his own family. They contain, however, valuable personal data and are sometimes the expressions of his most intimate thought and feeling. Epistle VII gives full scope to the Platonic exaltation of his friendship with Diodati. A letter to the Athenian Philaras sets forth very minutely the symptoms of his blindness. Others tell of his sickness and domestic distresses. Throughout the series there is much interesting talk of books and book buying. In tone the letters are often light and bantering. There is in them a somewhat affected urbanity and a tendency toward self-depreciation which is hardly in accord with Milton's deep satisfaction with his own gifts and achievements. On the other hand, he addresses his friends in terms of admiration sometimes approximating flattery. All this and the occasional note of complaint find their precedent in humanistic correspondence generally, particularly in the letters of Erasmus.

THE EARLY ANTI-EPISCOPAL PAMPHLETS (1641–1642)

From June, 1641, to the spring of 1642 Milton was actively engaged in public controversy on the question of church government, a subject which at that moment held the foreground in the debates of the Long Parliament and was engaging the attention of the entire nation. He composed in quick succession five pamphlets in the interests of the abolition of the episcopal system, carefully written and full of learning, becoming more and more heated and personal as he himself was attacked by controversialists of the opposing party.

The political situation was as follows: The Long

Parliament, summoned in 1640, having taken measures toward the redress of the civil grievances of the nation and disposed of Charles I's tyrannical minister, Strafford, proceeded, in 1641, to the question of church reform. Various bills were introduced in response to public petitions, including the so-called Root and Branch Bill of June, 1641, which provided for the utter abolition of Archbishops, Bishops, and other ecclesiastical officers. The intention was to establish a synodical or Presbyterian form of church government analogous to that in Scotland. There was opposition by both the high and broad church parties and a more moderate bill curtailing the powers of the Bishops but preserving the traditional system was proposed in the House of Lords.

The struggle in Parliament was prepared for and attended by a series of pamphlets on both sides of the question, the protagonist of the principle of episcopacy being Bishop Joseph Hall, who published a tract entitled *Episcopacy by Divine Right* in 1640 and another, *An Humble Remonstrance to the High Court of Parliament,* in January, 1641. In reply to this latter work, besides various tracts by Scottish Presbyterians in London, there appeared in March, 1641, a pamphlet entitled *An Answer to a Book entitled 'An Humble Remonstrance' in which the Originall of Liturgy and Episcopacy is Discussed.* This was written by a group of English Puritan ministers who signed themselves "Smectymnuus," a word composed of the initials of their various names. The leader of this group was Thomas Young, Milton's former tutor, and it is assumed by Masson that the poet himself may have assisted in its composition. The Smectymnuus pamphlet was followed in March by a reply of Bishop Hall and in May by

one from the pen of the learned James Ussher, Bishop of Armagh. It was at this point, when the Root and Branch Bill was under discussion in Parliament, that Milton, putting aside his literary plans, intervened with his first ecclesiastical document, *Of Reformation touching Church Discipline in England and the Causes that hitherto have hindered it,* published anonymously about June, 1641.[3]

This is a rather temperate and carefully reasoned historical discussion, revealing close study of the progress of the English church from the time of Henry VIII. Milton endeavors, first, to show the reasons in the situation under Henry, Edward, and Elizabeth why a compromise with Catholicism rather than a complete Protestant reform came to be adopted in the Anglican Church. He then refutes the arguments of those who contend for episcopacy on grounds of antiquity, showing that the system represented a corruption of primitive Christianity. In a second book he assails the defense of an episcopal régime as a form of church government naturally agreeing with monarchy and necessarily implied by it. Finally, he denounces with vehemence the corruptions into which the clergy have fallen, closing with a wonderful prayer for the deliverance of the nation from this un-English tyranny and the completion of God's glorious work of religious reform.

It is interesting to note that in this work Milton's position is essentially at one with that of the Scottish Presbyterians. He argues for synodical government. He prays to the Trinity and speaks slightingly of Arianism. Politically he is still, with the majority of his countrymen, conservative, assuming the monarchical form of government as that to which the nation is permanently committed.

[3] An elaborately edited modern edition is that of Hale.

The second tract is entitled *Of Prelatical Episcopacy, and whether it may be deduced from the Apostolical times by vertue of those testimonies which are alleged to that purpose in some late Treatises; one whereof goes under the name of James, Archbishop of Armagh.* This pamphlet, which appeared without Milton's name in June or July, 1641, is a brief point by point refutation, without any particular animus, of the Patristic authorities employed by Ussher in *The Judgment of Dr. Rainoldes touching the original of Episcopacy* to prove that the order of Bishops, superior to that of Presbyters, was an institution of the primitive church. Milton shows that the authorities alleged either do not justify the inferences or are themselves untrustworthy. In so doing he exhibits an intimate acquaintance with the church Fathers, an acquaintance the foundations of which we know to have been laid by a systematic study of their writings in the Horton period.[4]

The third tract, published almost simultaneously with the first and second, is directed against Bishop Hall, whose *Defence of the Humble Remonstrance against the frivolous and false exceptions of Smectymnuus,* had, as we have seen, appeared in March. Milton evidently believed in the principle "divide and conquer." His first tract had been an impersonal treatise setting forth the historical aspects of the problem; his second and third dealt severally with the two chief defenders of the Bishops. Its title is *Animadversions upon the Remonstrant's Defence against Smectymnuus.* Like the others it was anonymous.

Milton's tone toward Hall is much more bitter and personally slanderous than that which he had adopted in the refutation of Ussher. A reason for this is that Hall

[4] Hanford, *Chronology,* p. 291.

himself had made use of similar weapons in dealing with the Smectymnuans. Besides this, he found in Hall a cleverer and more popular controversialist, whose sallies naturally provoked rhetoric and satire rather than scholarship. "It is," he says, "nothing disagreeing with Christian meekness to handle such a one in a rougher accent, and to send forth his haughtiness well bespurted with his own holy water." His method is to quote verbatim Hall's more questionable statements and to append some sarcastic comment on each. He rakes up Hall's early Satires against him and makes merry with his satirical fiction *Mundus Alter et Idem.* Little material which is not already contained in the earlier tracts is added to the discussion.

A period of some eight months elapsed between the publication of the third and the fourth and fifth tracts. During that interval the country was drifting rapidly toward civil war. Charles had been forced to yield on the church question and had signed the Bishops' Exclusion Bill in February, but the paper controversy over episcopacy continued furiously, the cause of the Bishops being again championed in a collection of tracts by various important divines. Milton's new work was an elaborately written treatise in two books entitled *The Reason of Church Government urg'd against Prelaty,* published, with the author's name, in March, 1642. This is the longest and most interesting of Milton's ecclesiastical tracts. Though pausing occasionally to refute specific arguments in the collective volume above-mentioned he proceeds on the whole in a more philosophical manner, arguing systematically that the presbyterian, rather than the episcopal system is the one prescribed in the gospel, that prelacy, in

its external lordliness, in its predilection for rites, symbolisms, and vestments, and in its reliance on temporal authority in matters which should be purely moral and spiritual, is foreign to the spirit of Christianity. The last point, implying as it does the separation of Church and State, represents Milton's profound conviction and is a principle from which he never receded. He becomes eloquent also in opposition to the idea of enforcing uniformity of belief. The multiplication of sects and schisms, instead of frightening him as it does others, is in his thought a wholesome sign that the living work of reformation is going on. Diversity of doctrine, even the wildest, is better than a stagnant uniformity secured by the forcible suppression of free thought. The point of view looks forward to that of the *Areopagitica,* to be composed in the succeeding year. Underlying all is the essentially Protestant and Puritan feeling that religion is an affair of the individual. No priest can mediate between the soul and God; faith is not real until it is discovered anew in personal experience; the private conscience is the sole judge of man's moral and spiritual duties. Masson[5] quotes from the fourth pamphlet a noble passage praising the self-confidence of the righteous man who has learned to revere himself or rather the image of God within himself and is, therefore, indifferent to the approval or disapproval of others. How, Milton asks, can a man best be led to this "hill-top of sanctity and goodness"? By being taught that he is himself appointed and ordained by God to a sacred calling as a member of the church. The episcopal system "excludes Christ's people from the offices of holy discipline" and causes them "to have an unworthy

[5] Vol. II, p. 374.

and abject opinion of themselves, to approach to holy duties with a slavish fear, and to unholy things with a familiar boldness." The logic of this position, as Milton afterward found, leads through Presbyterianism to Independency and finally to pure individualism. But, however far in this direction his real opinions may already have gone, he allies himself in these pamphlets with the orthodox Presbyterian cause and he still speaks of the Scots in terms of friendly admiration. Particularly interesting and important is the long personal digression which forms the introduction to Book II. Milton has kept still about himself long enough. He expatiates in noble language upon the idealistic motives which have led him to abandon more pleasing tasks for the duty of playing a man's part in the work of purifying religion from its corruptions, and at the same time confides to the reader his personal ambition to write a lofty poem which the world will not willingly let die.[6] The concluding chapter is a denunciation of the mischief that Prelaty does in the state, another expanded prose rendering of the invective against the clergy in *Lycidas.*

In the last tract, *An Apology against a Pamphlet called 'A Modest Confutation of the Animadversions of the Remonstrant against Smectymnuus,'* issued early in the year 1642, Milton again returns to the pettier and more personal phases of the controversy. Bishop Hall, aided now by his son, had at last swung his battery against Milton himself in the pamphlet to which Milton alludes in his title. Goaded by the scorn of Milton's third tract, the *Animadversions,* the Halls, besides endeavoring to confute his reasons item by item, had launched all manner of

[6] See Appendix, pp. 280 ff.

scurrilous and irresponsible charges against him in his private life. Milton takes these quite seriously and attends at length to the congenial work of self-vindication. He describes his honorable career at the University, from which the Halls had said he was "vomited" forth. He tells in what employments he actually spends the morning and afternoon hours which he was charged with giving to debauchery, and, finally, replying to the accusation of unchastity, he communicates to the reader his "inmost thoughts," tracing through his early life, the growth of an exceptionally idealistic attitude on this very subject.[7] These personal digressions Milton justifies as necessary. He also defends the violence of his invective and the use of undignified, even indecent, language, by adverting to the examples of Luther and of Christ himself. Having satisfied his readers or at least himself on these points he returns to the onslaught against the remonstrances point by point. There is little sober reasoning, and Milton is more than once led in the heat of controversy to stultify his better judgment, as when he refuses to see any beauty or excellence in the English liturgy, but the object of leaving no word of his opponents without its retort and of holding the Halls personally up to ridicule is successfully achieved. They are, to use a phrase of Masson's, "gored and mangled" on every page.

THE DIVORCE TRACTS (1643–1645)

Milton's crusade against the divorce laws of his country followed almost immediately on the conclusion of the ecclesiastical controversy and continued to occupy him

[7] See Appendix, pp. 274 ff.

for nearly two years. *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* was published before August 1, 1643. A second edition, much enlarged, appeared in February, 1644, a new pamphlet, *The Judgment of Martin Bucer concerning Divorce,* in July of the same year, and finally *Tetrachordon,* and *Colasterion,* in March, 1645. Milton's active prosecution of this campaign was punctuated by the composition of the tracts *Of Education* and *Areopagitica.* The Divorce treatises form, however, a closely knit series and should be considered as a unit.

The composition of the first divorce pamphlet is associated by all Milton's biographers with his own difficulties in his matrimonial venture with Mary Powell, and much pretty speculation as to the precise nature of his experience has been built on the interpretation of this document. The most authoritative statement appears to be that of the anonymous biographer [8] to the effect that Milton, practically deserted by his wife, was preparing for a second marriage and sought to justify himself by writing his first divorce tract. He adds, however, that the need of a more liberal divorce law "had upon full consideration and by reading good authors previously been his opinion." According to Milton's own statement the divorce campaign was a second impersonal step in the cause of liberty, following upon the successful war against the authority of the Bishops (see page 32). Phillips gives an account which agrees essentially with that of the anonymous biographer, but states that Milton's resentment and the consequent incubation of the first pamphlet followed his wife's failure to return to him at Michaelmas (i. e., September 29), whereas we know that the tract was actually

[8] Quoted above, p. 28 ff.

in type by August 1 of that year. A recent student, Chilton Powell,[9] argues from this discrepancy that Milton's interest in divorce was entirely independent of his personal situation and desires, but it seems easier to assume with Masson that Phillips's dating of the marriage must be too late and that Milton's thoughts were turned in this direction by the failure of his wife to live up to her duties and his expectations. Once embarked on the subject, however, Milton appears to have considered it less from the personal standpoint than from that of public policy, and it is going too far to read into his phrases the reflection of his own bitterness, or to make poor Mary Powell the "mute and spiritless mate" of his theoretical descriptions. The fact is that Milton says very little about desertion as a ground of divorce, assuming that there would be general agreement on that point, though the canon laws which were still officially in force in England failed to recognize it. His main plea is that incompatibility of temper is a more vital impediment to the higher objects of marriage than any other and that the will of the parties should therefore be admitted as decisive for the continuance or dissolution of the bond. The function of the magistrate in the matter he would limit to the securing of conditions of divorce equitable for both parties. The principle is in perfect accord with Milton's whole philosophy. It was because he thought nobly of marriage as a spiritual rather than a merely physical union that he resented the common idea that it was dissoluble only on physical grounds. The idea of an external compulsion, binding two human beings together when mutual love and sympathy had departed, was repellent to his

[9] *English Domestic Relations*, Appendix B.

reason and excited him to eloquent and passionate denunciation. Milton reiterates this fundamental idea again and again, and it furnishes the one interesting and vital element in the whole voluminous debate. The attempt, which occupies him through many pages, to reconcile Scripture with his views has entirely lost its significance for the modern reader.

It is characteristic of Milton's temper and of his views as to the natural superiority of man to woman that he should speak oftenest of him as the injured party and should put the decision in favor of divorce chiefly in his hands. Yet he admits that the situation may sometimes be reversed and he appears to make an effort to be just to the woman and to put her interests on an equal footing with those of her husband in the matter.[10] If either party is dissatisfied, incompatibility is established and the marriage *ipso facto* dissolved. It belongs to man as the natural head of the house ordinarily to discern the situation and pronounce the decree.

In the preface to the second edition of the first tract Milton gives the impression that he had arrived at his views about divorce solely as a result of his own reflection and he speaks of himself as a pioneer in the attempt to free mankind from his domestic fetters. Yet the subject had been in almost continuous agitation since the Reformation, and Milton's ideas, though extreme, were not inconsistent with the general drift of Protestant opinion. Certain observations in the Commonplace Book, moreover, show that Milton had interested himself in the general philosophy of marriage as early as the Horton period, and that his mind was already set toward liberal

[10] See Gilbert, *Milton on the Position of Woman*, pp. 11 ff.

thought regarding it. He appears, however, to have been ignorant, when he began his tract, of the great body of Reformation discussion on divorce, for he there refers to none of the outstanding authorities. He must have studied them vigorously in the months immediately following the publication of his work, for the revised edition is interlarded with weighty opinions and reverend names. His greatest discovery in this research was the support lent to his ideas by the Protestant Divine, Martin Bucer, who, in his *De Regno Christi,* written for Edward VI, had argued stoutly in favor of absolute divorce in place of the separation from bed and board allowed by canon law, and had also admitted incompatibility as a ground for the annulment of marriage. Milton excerpted and published the relevant chapters of Bucer's book as a second document in the case under the title *The Judgment of Martin Bucer Concerning Divorce.* His third tract, *Tetrachordon,*[11] adds no new arguments but enters in more detail into the interpretation of the Scriptural passages, to satisfy, as there was grave need of doing, those who found his earlier explanations a bit too glib.

In the preface Milton alludes to the fact that Parliament had "been instigated to a hard censure of the former book," i. e., *The Doctrine and Discipline.* The reference is to the two petitions of the Stationers' Company for the punishment of Milton as the author of scandalous volumes, one addressed to the Commons, another, subsequently, to the Lords. Milton also inveighs briefly against the hostile mention of his "wicked book" by Mr. Herbert Palmer

[11]Tetrachord is a technical term in music, referring to the succession of four notes represented by the strings of the Greek lyre. Tetrachordon is the four-stringed lyre itself. Milton's tract deals with the four chief scriptural passages on divorce.

in a sermon before Parliament preached in August, 1644, and by Dr. Daniel Featley in his pamphlet *Dippers Dipt.* The real work of refuting the opponents who had now sprung up against him and of overwhelming them forever with invective was reserved for the last pamphlet, *Colasterion. A Reply to a Nameless Answer against 'The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce,' wherein the trivial Author of that Answer is discover'd, the Licencer conferr'd with, and the Opinion which they traduce defended. By the former author, J. M.* The "nameless answer" had been published in November, 1644, with a special note of approval prefixed to it by the licenser, Joseph Caryl. Milton had inquired into the origin of the document and had discovered that it was the work of a serving man turned solicitor. This wretch he belabors with personal abuse and insult, paying his compliments incidentally to William Prynne who had stigmatized the monstrous heresy of "divorce at pleasure" in one of his recent pamphlets, and to the officious licenser himself. Milton answers the arguments, such as they are, by reiterating his former points, but he evidently relies chiefly on ridicule to dispose of his opponent. Outrageous and even gross as is the language he applies to his victim there is no evidence that Milton is really angry. His fate, he says, in providing so silly an antagonist, extracts from him a "talent for sport." He promises on further provocation to deliver his answer in a satiric poem. Unfortunately no such occasion was given and the divorce issue, so far as Milton was concerned, was closed. He did not change his ideas, for they are restated as a part of the program of Christian belief in the *De Doctrina Christiana* (Book I, Chapter X).

Milton's arguments fell in his own day on deaf ears and his more radical principles have never been adopted in English law or indeed in the law of any western country. The tendency, however, has been, for better or for worse, toward, rather than away from, them.

OF EDUCATION (1644)

Milton's little tractate on education was anonymously published in June of the year 1644, just before the second divorce pamphlet. It is addressed as a letter to Samuel Hartlib, a public-spirited reformer who was interested in educational matters, particularly in the ideas of Comenius, and who had requested Milton to make a statement of his views on the subject. The treatise is the fruit of Milton's thoughtful experience of teaching and represents the program of humanistic education as it was conceived by the man who, of all scholars of his time, perhaps, best understood its meaning. The wisdom and modernity of many of the methods recommended, as, for example, the supplementing of textbook instruction by contact with men of practical experience, and by the observation of actual institutions and activities, has won the admiration of all thinkers on this subject. The goal of the discipline which Milton outlines is the formation of the well-rounded scholarly gentleman, who shall also be well fitted for public leadership, an ideal inherited from the early Renaissance. This is expressed in the famous definition of a complete and generous education as one which "fits a man to perform justly, skillfully, and magnanimously all the duties, public and private, of peace and war." The way to this object is through an understanding of the

civilization of antiquity, not as a dead or remote thing, but as an experience applicable at every point to modern life. Milton insists that the Greek and Latin languages should be studied not for themselves but as tools for the acquisition of the "solid things in them." The emphasis is from the first on the subject rather than the expression. He is violently opposed to forcing children into the composition of empty rhetorical and scholastic exercises before they have anything to say. The program is a severe one, including besides the reading of representative works in almost the whole range of Greek and Latin literature and the study in them of all the arts and sciences, the acquisition of Italian, Hebrew, and even Syriac, and a full course in military discipline. It is interesting to observe in Milton's program a reflection and modification of the education which he had himself received, partly from schools and tutors, partly by his own independent effort. His model school provides for the entire training of boys from the ages of twelve to twenty-one, after which they may, as he himself did, engage in foreign travel. Attendance at the University, which Milton had found so unsatisfactory, is not contemplated in the plan. On the other hand, the liberal principles embodied in the tractate are those of the more enlightened humanist reformers generally and are ultimately based on the educational thought of the ancients—Cicero, Plato, Quintilian, etc. Milton says he will not specify his indebtedness to these "old renowned authors," nor search "what many modern Januas and Didactics, more than ever I shall read, have projected." This is a disparaging reference to the titles of two of Comenius's works. But Milton certainly owed many suggestions to his contemporaries and predecessors

in educational theory. The Spaniard Vives, in his *De Tradendis Disciplinis,* has been mentioned as among the most important influences.[12]

It is also pointed out that *Of Education* does not adequately represent Milton's thought on education as a matter of public policy. The tractate offers an essentially aristocratic plan, designed for the training of the sons of gentlemen to leadership in war and peace. Elsewhere Milton advocates a system of state-supported universal instruction as necessary to the safety and welfare of a free commonwealth. No man ever believed in education more passionately than Milton or was himself more essentially a teacher.[13]

AREOPAGITICA (1644)

Areopagitica, Milton's great defense of the freedom of the press, was the fourth and last of the prose works to be written and published in the industrious year 1644. It appeared in November. The ordinance of Parliament which had occasioned it, an act requiring, among other things, that all books be licensed by an official censor before publication, had been passed June 14, 1643. This act reflected the increasing determination of the Presbyterian party, now in control in Parliament, to reduce Eng-

[12] Watson, *A Suggested Source of Milton's Tractate.* See also for discussion of Milton's ideas and their origin, Thompson, *Milton's 'Of Education;'* and Ainsworth, *Milton as a Writer on Education.*

[13] For a discussion of the reflections of Milton's pedagogic interests and philosophy in his poetry, see Bundy, *Milton's View of Education in 'Paradise Lost.'*

lish religious practice and opinion to a new uniformity and to silence political opposition. It was recognized by Milton and other men of independent tendencies as a revival in another form of the tyranny of the Stuart régime and particularly of a decree of the court of Star Chamber concerning printing, issued in 1637. This earlier licensing act had fallen in 1640 with the abolition of the illegal court which made it, and for three years printing had been practically free, during which time a multitude of pamphlets had been published of every shade of religious and political opinion. To Milton this diversity of writing was a wholesome sign of free intellectual activity, a promise of progress and reform; to the narrower Presbyterians it was a menace against orthodox Calvinistic thought and the stability of the new order. The whole matter had a special significance for Milton personally, since his own writings on divorce represented exactly such publications as were likely to be suppressed by the new law. *The Doctrine and Discipline* had, as we have seen, been attacked in a sermon before Parliament by Mr. Herbert Palmer. As a consequence, doubtless, of this Presbyterian wrath against it, the attention of the company of Stationers had been drawn to the fact that both this document in its first and second editions and another heretical work which Palmer had coupled with it were printed without being licensed under the new act. In reply to a petition by this organization (whose commercial rights were injured by unlicensed publication) Parliament ordered the printing committee to inquire out the authors of these works. Though the matter went no further, Milton must have felt in anticipation the injuries which he himself was

likely to be subjected to by the new decree. We know, however, from a passage [14] in the *Reason of Church Government* (1641), that his opinion regarding the liberty of the press antedated both this personal incident and the ordinance of 1643 itself. His convictions in this matter were an essential part of his general philosophy of freedom and a product of his instincts as a scholar and a teacher.

The work is addressed to Parliament in the hope of influencing its members to repeal a decree so inconsistent with their own history and purposes as the restorers of English liberties. After adroitly complimenting this body for its past achievements and excusing himself for venturing in a private capacity on this criticism of their recent act, Milton reviews the history of licensing from ancient times, showing that it has always been a concomitant of tyranny and associating its invention in its modern form with the reactionary Catholic Council of Trent. The aim is to prove the practice suspect in its origin and a product of the very forces which Parliament has overthrown. Secondly, Milton enters upon a noble defense of the benefit of books freely used, showing how necessary reading of every sort is to the attainment of knowledge and experience in a world where good and evil grow up indiscriminately together. Next he deals with the impossibility of the attempt to make men virtuous by external restraint. Corrupting influences are present everywhere and can be met only by building up an inner discipline and the power of rational choosing. This is the fundamental tenet of

[14] "For me, I have determined to lay up as the best treasure of a good old age, if God vouchsafe it me, the honest liberty of a free speech from my youth."

Milton's ethical philosophy and in setting it forth he rises to great heights of eloquence. He goes on to argue more specifically that the present law will be ineffective even as applied to publication. *Areopagitica* itself, though he does not say so, being published in defiance of the law, is an instance of the impossibility of enforcing it. Finally Milton attacks the order as a discouragement to intellectual activity and a hindrance to the cause of truth. The plea here is one of resolute faith in the competence of human nature and particularly of English nature to work out its own intellectual salvation; in the divine property, also, of Truth itself, which is sure to prevail ultimately over error if the two are allowed to grapple. Milton expresses with extraordinary forcefulness the resentment of the mature mind at being kept under watch and ward; and vividly displays the results of such a policy, in spiritual stagnation and a "starched conformity of opinion." The very spirit of the English Protestant speaks through him, but his principles are as vital and his warnings as necessary to-day as they ever were. The *Areopagitica* is Milton's greatest prose work; it is one of those few books which are capable, as John Morley said of Mill's *Essay on Liberty*, of adding a cubit to a man's intellectual stature.

Milton's plea for liberty failed in its purpose of bringing about an immediate repeal of the licensing act, but it was employed when the issue was raised again in 1679 and 1693;[15] it furnished Mirabeau with the substance of a pamphlet on the freedom of the press in 1788; and it has

[15] *A Just Vindication of Learning or an Humble Address to the High Court of Parliament in behalf of Liberty of the Press*, London, 1679. *Reasons humbly offered for the Liberty of Unlicenced Printing*, London, 1693. Both works are abridgments of *Areopagitica*.

armed the minds of individuals in all times against the ever-recurring attempt to silence thought.

In form the *Areopagitica* is a majestic example of the classical oration. The title is that of a written speech of Isocrates addressed, in a private capacity, to the Athenian Court of the Areopagus. It conforms to all the principles of oratory laid down by Quintilian and embodied in Demosthenes and Cicero. The speeches of the fallen angels in the second book of *Paradise Lost,* the description of Satan's address to Eve (*P. L.* IX, 670 ff.), and the characterization of the Athenian orators who "wielded at will that fierce democraty" in the days of a noble eloquence "since mute" (*P. R.* IV, 268 ff.) show how deeply Milton had studied and admired this branch of ancient literature. The principle of toleration expressed in *Areopagitica* had been stoutly maintained in Milton's time against the prevailing doctrine by other Independents, including Roger Williams in his *Bloody Tenet of Persecution.*[16]

OF THE TENURE OF KINGS AND MAGISTRATES (1649)

A period of four years respite from public controversy followed the publication of the last of the divorce tracts in March, 1645. At the beginning of this interval Milton issued the first edition of his poems. From 1645–8 he composed six sonnets and translated eight Psalms. He also carried on his work of teaching, adding several pupils to the two Phillips boys who had been with him since 1642. The bulk of his time must, however, have been devoted to study in preparation for projected works, par-

[16] The most scholarly edition of *Areopagitica* is still that of Hales.

ticularly *The History of Britain* and the treatise *Of Christian Doctrine*. It seems likely, also, that the composition of one or both of these works was actually begun in this period. Meanwhile he was silently watching public events, and the movement of his mind regarding them may be clearly traced in the sonnets above-mentioned. The reception of his divorce pamphlets had completed the work of turning him against the Presbyterian party and of aligning him with the Independents, who, in 1647, finally triumphed in Parliament and took possession of the government. He must also, in company with the rest of this group, have become increasingly republican in sentiment, as the impossibility of a compromise with Charles became more and more apparent. We know from an early entry in the Commonplace Book that he had long since privately nourished such thoughts even before the civil war began, but he allowed them to find no place in any of his published utterances thus far. By the time when the second civil war was successfully concluded and the captive King brought to trial Milton was quite ready to adhere to the Republic and to join the cry for the king's deposition and death.

The document in which he did so, the treatise *Of the Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*,[17] was, like his first contribution to the episcopal controversy, unsolicited. It was probably composed during the king's trial, certainly before his execution in February, 1649, and was designed to silence the opposition of the Presbyterians and others against extreme measures, also to reconcile the public mind to the event itself. The pamphlet appeared two weeks after Charles's death.

[17] An annotated edition with full introduction is that of Allison.

In it Milton makes no indictment of Charles, does not, in fact, even mention him by name. His argument is the abstract one, that men are by nature free, that their relation to their governors is one of voluntary contract which may be terminated at will. He assembles the authority of the Greeks and Romans, of the church Fathers, of modern political theorists, of the reformation divines, and of Scripture itself to show that men have a right to depose a tyrant and even to put him to death. He cites many instances from history of the exercise of this right. More specifically he inveighs against the Presbyterian ministers, who, having in the beginning fostered the rebellion, now refuse to accept the logical consequences of their own action.

The underlying philosophy of the tract is in line with the main development of liberal political theory throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance and Milton says nothing that had not been said a hundred times. In style the work is plain and unimpassioned. Milton takes the momentous step of writing himself regicide without the usual accompaniment of enthusiastic eloquence inspired by the contemplation of his own personality and his cause.

WORK FOR THE COUNCIL OF STATE. EIKONOKLASTES (1649)

As a result of the zeal for the Commonwealth displayed in the *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* Milton received in March, 1649, an appointment to the office of Secretary for Foreign Tongues to the Council of State. He was immediately called to the performance of a series of exacting literary duties which took precedence of all

other work and occupied him continuously for nearly ten years. These duties consisted in the translation of such documents in foreign tongues as were referred to him by the Council, the drafting of the Latin correspondence of state with foreign powers, and finally the composition to order of replies whether in Latin or English to various attacks leveled against the Commonwealth.

The Latin correspondence or *Letters of State* are usually published among Milton's works and they constitute an important and interesting set of historical documents; they are, however, not strictly his except in the expression and need not be here described. Those which came perhaps closest to him personally and bear most clearly the stamp of his own eloquence are the ones addressed to Louis XIV and other foreign sovereigns in protest against the massacre of the Waldensian Protestants by the Duke of Savoy. Milton shared to the full the indignation of his country at this crime and the letters are the equally impassioned prose counterparts of the famous sonnet which he wrote in his private capacity of poet, "Avenge O Lord thy Slaughtered Saints."

Among the first of the more miscellaneous tasks assigned to him was to attack the peace which had been concluded with the Catholics in Ireland by Charles's representative, the Earl of Ormond, in 1648. Milton printed the articles themselves with the correspondence between Ormond and the Governor of Dublin, and a pronouncement by the Presbyterians of Belfast, appending thereto an original discussion entitled *Observations on the Articles of Peace with the Irish Rebels,* in which he denounces the Irish bitterly as enemies to religion, condemns the agreement whereby Ireland is in effect released from fealty

to England, and answers the various accusations made by the Belfast Presbyterians against the acts of the republicans. This is Milton's contribution to the Irish question. It prepares the way for the merciless suppression of the rebellion a few months later by Cromwell.

The next commission given to Milton by the Council was far more momentous. It was that of writing a work to counteract the menacing effect on public opinion of the famous *Eikon Basilike* or King's Book, which had appeared almost immediately after the king's death (i. e., in February, 1649) and was achieving an enormous circulation. The *Eikon,* or, to employ its subtitle, *The True Portraiture of his Sacred Majesty in his Solitudes and Sufferings,* purports to be a private record of the self-communings of Charles through the last years, almost the last hours, of his life, revealing him as a model of conscientiousness and piety, tender of his family, solicitous for the good of his people, loyally protestant, and given to earnest prayer. The book was suspected from the moment of its appearance and is now believed to be a pious fraud, the work not of Charles at all but of one of his adherents, Bishop Gauden, who took this means of winning public sympathy for his memory and cause by setting up his image as that of a martyred saint. This object it signally accomplished and the popularity of the work was rightly felt by the leaders of the Commonwealth to constitute a danger of the first magnitude.

Milton called his answer *Eikonoklastes* (i. e., the image-breaker). It is a lengthy examination of the *Eikon,* chapter by chapter, as was the manner of seventeenth century controversy. He deprecates the idea of assailing the memory of one who has paid his debt to nature, but,

accepting the necessity of meeting such a challenge, proceeds to demonstrate the worthlessness of Charles's defense of his conduct at every point. The personal indictment which he had avoided making in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* is now drawn with a vengeance. The pious passages, which constituted the most popular feature of the work, he assails as mere hypocrisy, instancing Shakespeare's *Richard III* as an example of a tyrant who masked his evil purposes with religious cant. The most damaging point in the entire statement was his demonstration that one of the rhetorical prayers had been plagiarized word for word from that "vain and amatorious poem," Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia.* It was subsequently charged against Milton that he himself, in collaboration with Bradshaw, had caused this prayer to be inserted in some of the editions of the *Eikon* for the purpose of discrediting the king's sincerity, and the reliability of this charge has been vigorously maintained in a recent study.[18] The balance of evidence is, however, strongly against it.[19]

A newly discovered fact of much interest is Milton's indebtedness for many of his arguments, allusions, and turns of phrase, to an earlier answer to the *Eikon Basilike,* viz., a pamphlet entitled *Eikon Alethine* which had appeared anonymously on or before August 26, 1649, assailing among other things the genuineness of the royal authorship.[20] This work, which had also, perhaps, been written at the direction of the Council, was itself a reply to a royalist book *The Princely Pelican,* "containing satisfac-

[18] Liljegren, *Studies in Milton.*

[19] The arguments of J. S. Smart in *Milton and the King's Prayer* appear decisive against Liljegren's case.

[20] Loewenhaupt, *The Writing of Milton's "Eikonoklastes."*

tory reasons that his sacred person was the sole author," and it was followed in turn by the *Eikon Episte,* another argument to the same effect. Milton's tract was, therefore, the fifth in the controversial series. It was evidently felt that the proper step in the strategy of combating the King's Book was now to abandon the issue of its authenticity and to attack it on other grounds, and this accordingly was what Milton did. It is not certain whether he had seen the *Eikon Episte* before writing *Eikonoklastes,* but in any case he must have composed it very rapidly between August 26, the date of the *Eikon Alethine,* and October 6, when his own pamphlet was on sale.

POLITICAL TRACTS IN THE CONTROVERSY WITH SALMASIUS AND MORUS (1651–1655)

In 1650, the next year after the publication of *Eikonoklastes,* Milton began the last and greatest battle of his controversial career. Charles II, now in exile in France, had engaged Salmasius (Claude Saumaise), a French scholar resident in Holland, to prepare an elaborate Latin tract, addressed to the intellectual leaders of Europe and designed to hold up to public execration the men who had voted the death of the king. This work, which appeared in 1649 with the title *Defensio Regia pro Carolo I,* though less insidious in its effects in England than the *Eikon Basilike,* was even more dangerous to the Commonwealth in its international relations. It had the prestige of a great name behind it, for Salmasius was universally recognized as one of the foremost men of learning in an age in which scholarly distinction was still supposed to vouch for the validity of a public utterance of this sort.

Milton, in his official capacity and as the most learned and eloquent controversialist on the republican side, was ordered to compose the answer to this attack. The result was the longest of his prose works hitherto—the *Defence of the English People Against Salmasius* (*Ioannis Miltoni Angli Pro populo anglicano defensio contra Claudii anonymi, alias Salmasii, Defensionem regiam*). It was published by the printer Dugard in March, 1651. Since Milton's tract was addressed to a continental rather than an English audience it was composed in Latin. Its author inevitably felt the thrill of this first appearance before the wider court of European opinion and he put into the work his maximum effort. Later he spoke with pride of his "noble task with which all Europe rings from side to side." Yet the *Defensio* can hardly be called to-day a noble work. It is filled from beginning to end with personalities, assailing in abusive phrase the scholarship, the mercenary motives, and the private character of Salmasius, as if to discredit him as a man and a grammarian were the best means of discrediting the cause which he was pleading. There is also argument in abundance, but Milton seldom rises to principles, confining himself rather to point by point replies to his opponent, demonstrating again and again that the action of the regicides was justified by English law, by ancient and modern learned authority, by the precedent of other peoples, by the tyrannical character of Charles, and by public necessity. The materials of the *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* and of *Eikonoklastes* are repeated and elaborated. The Presbyterians are scored anew. Such eloquence as the piece can show is the eloquence of scorn. Above all Milton denounces the intrusion of a foreigner into the affairs of

his countrymen and he shows at length the inconsistency of Salmasius' point of view with ideas expressed in his previous writings.

The *Defense of the English People* made such a stir abroad as Milton could have wished. Salmasius left the court of Queen Christina of Sweden, where he had been living in great honor, discredited and disgraced, according to report, by Milton's scathing treatment of his work and character. The reply to which he was goaded was written, but for some reason withheld from publication until 1659. He died in 1663. Meanwhile several minor continental royalists entered the field, leveling their attack at Milton personally. It was not, however, until the appearance in 1652 of an anonymous answer of real power (*Regii Sanguinis Clamor ad Coelum adversus Parricidas Anglicanos, The Cry of the King's Blood to Heaven against the English Parricides*) that he undertook an answer. This new work, *The Second Defense of the English People by John Milton, Englishman, in reply to an Infamous Book entitled 'Cry of the King's Blood,'* did not appear until the spring of 1654, though it had been ordered by the Council long before. Milton was waiting, he said, for the rumored reply of Salmasius. Besides this he was now blind, the complete ruin of his eyesight having followed in 1652 the composition of the *First Defense*, caused according to Milton's own statement by his unremitting application to that task.

The *Second Defense,* like the first, contains an abundance of virulent and undignified personalities, directed now against Alexander More or Morus, a Scottish-French scholar domiciled in Holland and closely associated with Salmasius. The actual author was Peter Du Moulin but

the more distinguished More had had a hand in the printing and circulation of the volume and had supplied a preface; he was widely believed in Holland to be its author and reports to that effect, together with certain scandals regarding his relations with Bontia, a serving maid of Salmasius's wife, had reached Milton through the English press. Though Morus denied his responsibility for the work, and though Milton was officially urged by the Dutch ambassador in London to stay his hand, he remained unconvinced and proceeded to administer chastisement accordingly, making the most of the Bontia scandal and afterward regretting that he had not included other discreditable stories about More which reached him later.

Apart from these elements, which are excusable only in the light of the provocation given by the *Regii Sanguinis Clamor* with its personal abuse of Milton, and of the controversial practice of the times, the *Second Defense* is a much nobler and more interesting book than the first. It was designed not merely to be a crushing blow to the author of the *Clamor* but also a worthy celebration of the cause of the Commonwealth and its great leaders. This object is more nearly in accord with Milton's conception of the public function of the poet as stated in the *Reason of Church Government* than anything he had hitherto written. It is a fruit of patriotic feeling and an enthusiastic love of liberty. These emotions Milton characteristically associates with his own personality, making himself not only the defender of a cause but also a portion of the cause. Such identification it is that rouses the poet in him and fires his noblest eloquence. Thus the passage which he devotes to an account of his life

and services to liberty, written to clear his name from the slanders of his opponents, becomes a piece of artistic self-portraiture akin to the great personal expressions in *Paradise Lost* and some of the Sonnets. Pitched in an even higher tone are his statements about his blindness, the fact of which had been roughly alluded to by Du Moulin as a punishment visited upon him by God for his sins. Milton's own meditations on the subject had resulted in the feeling that his blindness was in part a voluntary sacrifice, and that the Deity, proving him by this affliction, had vouchsafed in compensation an inward illumination not shared by other men. Far from being a disgrace his blindness marked him as a creature set apart for God's peculiar uses and worthy of a special reverence. The passage (quoted in the Appendix) is parallel in idea, even in some of its phraseology, with the famous invocation to light at the beginning of Book III of *Paradise Lost*.

The eloquence produced by this new mood carries over into other passages in the work. It reaches great dignity in the panegyric on Cromwell, an enthusiastic biographic portrait in the manner of antiquity, celebrating his triumphs and his character, likening him to the great statesmen and patriots of Greece and Rome. Proof of the fact that we are here close to the sources of Milton's specifically poetic inspiration is furnished by the identity in mood and idea of this passage with the more concentrated expression in the sonnet to Cromwell. In each case the hero becomes for a moment the vessel of Milton's ethical idealism. His praise is made the occasion for the utterance of a plea for the application of principles in the administration of the state without which the English people

will slip back into the slavery from which they have risen.

The sequel of Milton's misdirected castigation in the *Second Defense* was a disclaimer and personal vindication by More himself under the title *Fides Publica* (i. e., Public Testimony in his own behalf). This work, bound in a single volume with a new edition of Milton's *Second Defense,* was issued at The Hague in 1654 by the printer Ulac, who was quite willing that his press should speak on both sides of the question so long as sales continued good. Besides vigorously denying responsibility for the *Clamor* and carefully documenting his own honorable career in reply to the aspersions of the *Defensio,* More very naturally censures Milton's injustice in attacking him, claiming that the English writer had every opportunity of knowing that he was not the author of the work. With keen instinct he pitches upon the evidences of Milton's excessive self-esteem, denouncing his presumption in taking it upon himself to instruct Cromwell in his duties. The *Fides Publica* was followed by a supplement in 1655. Milton's reply, the *Pro Se Defensio,* or, to translate its full title, *The English John Milton's Defense for Himself, in reply to Alexander Morus, Churchman, rightly called author of the notorious book entitled 'Cry of the King's Blood,'* appeared in August of the same year. This work attempts to establish if not the actual authorship yet at least the full responsibility of Morus for the *Clamor* and to discredit item by item his published testimonials. The new scandals which had come to him too late for inclusion in the *Second Defense* are now rehearsed at length. The work lacks entirely the higher qualities of the *Second Defense* and is on the whole devoid of in-

terest. It contains, however, one of those curious passages in defense of the use of gross language and personal vilification against the enemies of righteousness which show how little at ease Milton really was about his own controversial practices. It is only by convincing himself that, in prosecuting private enmities, he is exposing and correcting public delinquencies, that he is enabled to take that satisfaction in his achievement which is for him a psychological necessity. The *Pro Se Defensio* has never been translated and is not included in the Bohn or Mitford editions of Milton's works.

THE HISTORY OF BRITAIN (1646–1660)

The dust and turmoil of the Salmasius-Morus controversy was followed by a period in Milton's career of comparative leisure. He had, since the beginning of his blindness, been progressively less active in the Latin secretaryship. An assistant, Thomas Meadows, had been appointed for him in 1653; his salary was reduced and commuted to a life pension in 1655, after which time, though he nominally remained in office till the Restoration, and though his state letters continue until 1659, he must have been comparatively free from his official responsibilities. The result was a renewed occupation with three works of scholarship, begun before the execution of the king, but interrupted by the call to public service. One of these, a Latin Dictionary, was never completed and remained unpublished. The others were a *History of Britain* and the Latin theological work *Of Christian Doctrine,* both of which appear to have been finished or practically so between 1655 and 1660.

The *History of Britain* may be regarded as a sort of commutation of Milton's earlier projects for a drama or an epic on a British legendary theme. He rejected the Arthurian story in favor of the more significant and authentic biblical theme, but his literary and patriotic interest in the materials continued keen and demanded expression. More directly the *History* is the fruit of the long course of historical reading recorded in the Commonplace Book. Milton reached in his program the British historians about 1641–2 and went carefully through Holinshed, Speed, Camden, Buchanan, together with a few of the older authorities like Bede. His study apparently convinced him that the story of his country had never been worthily related. The credulity and garrulousness of men like Holinshed must have contrasted strongly in his mind with the dignified work of the Greek and Roman historians. His resolution to do something for the annals of his own people like what Tacitus and Sallust had done for Rome must have taken form shortly after, but the more pressing matters of the ecclesiastical and divorce controversies postponed the beginning of the work till circa 1646. By March, 1649, he had, as he himself tells us, completed the first four books, bringing the story down to the union of England under Egbert. His secretaryship apparently interrupted further activity until 1655, when he added Books V and VI, containing the story of the Danish invasions and the Norman Conquest. At this point he stopped, but the fact that the work remained unpublished until 1670 would seem to indicate that he continued to cherish his original idea of bringing it down to his own day. The *History* and the Latin dictionary represent perhaps Milton's only uncompleted projects.

In the composition of the work Milton aims at veracity, brevity, and readableness. His fondness for the legendary incidents leads him to include them, but always with some critical remark to indicate that they are not to be accepted naïvely. Though he is influenced by modern writers, particularly Holinshed, Camden, and Buchanan, he goes back to the original authorities—the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and Laws, Bede, the medieval chroniclers, etc. —as no English historian had done before him, and exhibits a very modern sense of the need of weighing their respective values. His critical and scholarly point of view has won the admiration of such a distinguished contemporary historian as Professor Sir Charles Firth,[21] who finds that Masson has greatly underestimated the originality of Milton's work.

But Milton could not write either history or poetry without a fundamentally ethical and philosophic bias. We accordingly find him emphasizing throughout, the relation between national morality and national prosperity, as when he attributes the ease of the Norman conquest to the corruption of the English, which had "fitted them for servitude." He often has his eye on contemporary affairs as he analyzes the causes of failure or success in the past; to him a chief value of the study of history is to be found in the lessons which it holds for the modern statesman. As originally written, Book III of the *History* contained a long digression, apropos of the state of Britain when the Romans left it, on the parallel confusion which attended the close of the civil wars in 1648. This was excised by the censor and separately published in 1681 as *Mr. John Milton's Character of the Long Parliament*

[21] *Milton as a Historian.*

and the Assembly of Divines. Personal and political prejudice is revealed in his description of the warrior queen Boadicea as "a distracted woman with a mad crew at her heels," in his unsympathetic treatment of the evangelization of Britain under Augustine, and in his deliberate refusal to go into the details of ecclesiastical history.[22]

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE (1655–1660?)

The details of the composition of Milton's great theological work *De Doctrina Christiana* are not so clear as in the case of *The History of Britain.* The statement of Phillips indicates that he returned to it in 1655; Milton himself describes in the preface the collection of the materials from Scripture of which it is composed and the reading of books of divinity in preparation for it as a work which began in his youth. There is, finally, evidence in the preserved manuscript (see below) that the work stood complete by about 1661.

This manuscript came to light in 1823 and it was published for the first time in 1825. Its earlier history is most interesting. After Milton's death the document was in the hands of a young Oxford graduate, Daniel Skinner, who had served as the last of the poet's literary and scholarly assistants. Quite possibly Milton had himself delivered it with instructions for its publication. At any rate Skinner recopied the first half of it and sent the

[22] The original edition of 1670 was reprinted without change in 1677 and 1695. Toland's text, published in 1698, contained several insertions not found in the first three editions. He apparently used a copy of the 1670 volume annotated by Milton's hand. See Glicksman, *The Editions of Milton's "History of Britain."*

whole to the Dutch publisher Elzevir to be printed. Being warned, however, that his responsibility for the publication of such a work would mean the death of his own political ambitions Skinner had the document returned to him. It subsequently found its way into the Public Records office were it lay forgotten until its discovery by the Keeper, Robert Lemon. The work of deciphering, translating, and editing it was entrusted by the command of George IV to Bishop Charles Sumner. Its appearance occasioned Macaulay's famous essay on Milton in 1825. The second half of the manuscript, which represents the original draft, is in the hand of one of Milton's amanuenses whose name we know [23] and whose work for the poet can be traced in every dictated document which has been preserved from the years 1657 to 1661. He was evidently a trained scribe whom Milton regularly employed until the fall of his fortunes at the Restoration compelled him to do with more casual assistance.

It is easy to see why the work remained unpublished in Milton's lifetime. He had conceived it in the enthusiasm of the Commonwealth period, when religious belief was in a state of flux and there seemed to be a hope that mankind could be united in a program of liberal Christianity such as Milton desired. Propaganda was actually on foot in Europe, headed by Milton's friend James Durie, for bringing the Protestant sects together in a community of belief and action. The *De Doctrina,* written in Latin so that the leaders of European thought might read it and addressed to Christian churches everywhere, was perhaps intended to furnish the reasoned theological basis of

[23] It was Jeremie Picard. See Hanford, *The Rosenbach Milton Documents.*

this new religious unity. With the Restoration all immediate expectation of the fulfillment of the plan (at least so far as England was concerned) came to an end. There was, besides, the actual personal danger involved in publishing the work. Milton's hope of safety depended on his silence, and the *De Doctrina* was a piece of daring heresy. Milton's insistence on man's free will and his practical denial of predestination were in direct contradiction to the chief tenets of orthodox Calvinism; his treatment of the person of Christ as far inferior to God and his conversion of the Holy Ghost into little more than a figure of speech indicated Arian sympathies which were anathema to all the dominant Christian creeds. The repudiation, finally, of all forms and organizations of worship except those simple ones prescribed by Scripture renewed the Puritan indictment against Anglicanism, now reëstablished and enforced as the state religion. As if to add gratuitously to the offenses of the work against established doctrine Milton introduces a statement in favor of divorce and demonstrates that even polygamy is not prohibited by divine law.

The chief virtue of the work in Milton's eyes was that its principles were derived solely from Scripture. Its main bulk consists of quotations and references from the Bible, arranged under appropriate headings, with a generalized statement of the doctrine which each group of them supports. Of course Milton could not have arrived at these formulations without a wide acquaintance with the varieties of Christian thought and he enters into elaborate discussions of many of the controverted points of theological history. But his infallible test for the acceptance or rejection of a doctrine is its conformity with God's own

word as recorded in the inspired writings of the Old and New Testaments.

The peculiarities of Milton's theological ideas will be treated more fully in the discussion of the intellectual background of *Paradise Lost*. The *De Doctrina* reads like a doctrinal commentary on that work and can be ignored by no thorough student. Milton has, however, deliberately avoided in his poem, especially in the more dangerous issues, the clear and uncompromising precision of his statements in the prose. The *De Doctrina* is written in a coldly intellectual style, terse and logical, without the slightest touch of eloquence. The document is the steely framework of Milton's intellectual system, deliberately stripped of all the elements of personality, color, and passion which invested his customary vision of the world. His rigid will and the years of logical training at Cambridge are responsible for his ability to accomplish such a result.

LATER ECCLESIASTICAL PAMPHLETS

The troublous times which followed the death of Cromwell in 1658 brought a renewal of pamphlet activity in Milton. Occupied though he was with calmer scholarly tasks and already launched on the composition of *Paradise Lost* he could not fail, now that public affairs were again in a state of flux, to endeavor to exert an influence. His method is the old one of memorials to Parliament in his private capacity of citizen.

Politically Milton had been, through the Protectorate, a staunch Cromwellian. But he never assented to Cromwell's policy of maintaining a modified church establish-

ment with a committee empowered to settle the compensation of ministers and to solder the various denominations together in a loosely orthodox unity. From this unity the Catholics, the High Church and Arminian Episcopalians, the Quakers, and those sects which denied the divinity of Jesus Christ were excluded, and though Cromwell himself attempted to secure toleration even for Jews, he never became an open champion of that complete religious freedom for which Milton hoped. Under a new Protector and a new Parliament it seemed possible that these abuses might be remedied. Milton's convictions in the matter centered in two points: first, that the civil authorities had no right to exercise any compulsion whatsoever in matters of religious belief, and, second, that the system of tithes or taxes exacted by law for the support of the clergy was an abuse and should give way to voluntary contributions by individual congregations. He attacked these two problems separately, the first in a brief pamphlet entitled *A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes; Shewing that it is not lawful for any power on Earth to compel in matters of Religion,* published in February, 1659. The foundation of the argument is that Scripture alone being the divine rule of belief and the interpretation thereof being an affair of private judgment "no man or body of men in these times can be infallible judges or determiners in matters of religion to any other men's consciences but their own." Christ's kingdom, moreover, is purely spiritual and the attempt to regulate it by external force can do only harm. Milton's plea is, as it was in *Areopagitica,* for universal toleration, Papists only excepted, because they represent a political power dangerous to the safety of the state. Beyond this there is

implied rather than clearly expressed the conviction that religion should be left entirely to itself without even such a tolerant state support as Cromwell wished to give it in his establishment. The argument is largely based on Scripture.

On May 25, 1659, Richard Cromwell was forced to abdicate and the original Rump Parliament, composed largely of republican members, restored to power. The question of disestablishment and the abolition of the tithe system was now actually brought before the house, and Milton accordingly launched in August his second pamphlet, *Considerations touching the likeliest means to remove Hirelings out of the Church. Wherein is also discoursed of Tithes, Church Fees, Church Revenues; and whether any maintenance of Ministers can be settled by law.* Milton hails the new Parliament with enthusiastic praise, implying that the true custodians of English liberty have returned to power. His thesis is that the mercenary spirit in the clergy has always been the most mischievous evil in the church, and that this spirit is encouraged and promoted by the present system of legally enforced contributions. His ideal is a clergy serving without any material reward at all, but he makes so much concession to the necessities of the case as to allow them compensation from the voluntary offerings of their parishioners. Poor congregations may be served by the occasional visits of missionaries supported by the wealthier parishes or even, if necessary, by subsidies out of public funds. In general, he believed that ministers should be content with scanty salaries, finding true reward in the fulfillment of their spiritual mission as preachers of the Word. He is convinced that if profits are cut off only such men as are really worthy will be drawn into the ministry. In the sug-

gestion that preachers may support themselves by other occupations and in Milton's denial of the value for them of an elaborate education we see an inclination toward the idea of a lay ministry, which is the logical consequence of Milton's Protestantism and which was already in practice among the Quakers and other radical sects. Milton by no means stood alone in his opinions; but the majority was still against him, and Parliament refused to take the proposed action looking toward religious disestablishment.

TRACT ON A FREE COMMONWEALTH (1659)

Except for a brief interruption in 1659 the Rump Parliament continued in office until February, 1660. The burning question of the hour was no longer that of establishment or disestablishment, but what form of government would finally emerge from the anarchy into which England had increasingly fallen since the death of Cromwell. There was active discussion, in Parliament and out, of the best plan of establishing a republican government to meet the menace of the restoration of the monarchy for which the public was beginning to clamor with increasing insistency. At this stage of affairs Milton undertook again to exercise an influence on public opinion and on parliamentary action by making a final plea against bringing back the Stuarts and by recommending a constitutional scheme quite different from any that had been proposed. Before his pamphlet could be published, however, General Monk, in whom the real authority now rested, had turned against the Rump, canceled the writs which it had issued for a reëlection, and reconstituted the Long Parliament by restoring the members who had been secluded from it in 1648. This body promptly issued its own

writs for the election of "a full and free Parliament." The likelihood of either the newly reconstituted Long Parliament or the people in their approaching choice of its successor listening to anything Milton had to say was very slim. He, nevertheless, issued the tract which he had composed, and, conscious of the fact that the word of General Monk would decide the future of the Commonwealth, sent it to him, with a letter giving its substance in briefer form.

The tract, which appeared in February or March, 1660, was entitled *The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth and the Excellence thereof with the Inconveniences and Dangers of Readmitting Kingship in this Nation.* It opens with a review of the steps which had led to the establishment of the Commonwealth and a representation of the evils which would result from undoing the work of liberty by bringing back Charles's son. His constructive proposal is that sovereignty should henceforth be vested in a Grand or General Council chosen by a carefully sifted electorate and sitting in perpetuity. Such a body, Milton thinks, will give a stable government by the best men more effectively than successive parliaments. As a concession to the views of Harrington and his followers in the Rota Club, Milton reluctantly admits the principle of a partial rotation whereby a few members are retired each year and others chosen (apparently by the Council itself) to fill their places. To this body he adds a smaller council for executive action, elected by the General Council, and also a series of representative assemblies in every county, which shall have complete autonomy in local affairs. Milton's scheme is partly modeled on the government of the Netherlands, partly on

the ideal commonwealth of Plato, with its aristocratic rule by the guardian class. It expresses his lack of faith in a true democracy and yet avoids the equal evil of a one man power.

The Ready and Easy Way was eagerly read and it provoked immediate replies from the Royalist Group, who were becoming more and more outspoken. The "good old cause" was evidently lost, but Milton fought till the end. He published in April a brief reply to an open argument for the restoration by Charles I's former chaplain, Dr. Griffith,[24] and he reissued *The Ready and Easy Way* in a second, expanded edition, less than a month before the newly elected Parliament voted the Restoration. In this revision Milton no longer disguises from himself the fact that the event he dreads is practically inevitable. He intensifies the picture of the ruin and disgrace which will attend it and elaborates his scheme of a Grand Perpetual Council, but he knows that he is "exhorting a torrent." His pamphlet has become a final indulgence in free speech before the "long Lent of Servitude," his eloquence "the last words of our expiring liberty."

LAST PAMPHLETS (1673–1674).

The Restoration silenced Milton politically for many years. Even he realized the present uselessness and the danger of further pleas for liberty when there was none. Besides this, he was at last engaged on his great poetic enterprise. Yet it seems likely that he would unhesitatingly have laid *Paradise Lost* aside again and risked his

[24] *Brief Notes Upon a late Sermon, titl'd "The Fear of God and the King" . . . by Matthew Griffith, D.D.* This was answered in April by Roger L'Estrange in *No Blinde Guides.*

personal safety if occasion had presented itself in which to strike another real blow for liberty. Meanwhile he must have watched the progress of affairs almost as closely as before, and, when the three poems were written, he found a last opportunity to exercise in a limited way an influence on public opinion in one of the old issues with which he had been concerned. Charles II's Declaration of Indulgence, granting freedom of worship to the Non-Conformists, was issued in March, 1672. The evident fact that it was mainly intended as a relief for Catholics raised a cry against it from Dissenters and Anglicans alike and it was rescinded by Parliament in the following year. The Non-Conformists hoped for the passage of an act which without benefiting the Papists would free themselves from their disabilities. Some of them advocated a recomprehension within the establishment. Milton's tract, published along with many others in 1673, was entitled *Of True Religion, Heresy, Toleration, and the growth of Popery.* It is an attempt to bring the Protestant sects together in mutual charity and to induce them to take a tolerant attitude toward differences in the nonessential points of doctrine. Any creed based on the word of God, however variously interpreted, is true religion. Heresy is a religion taken up and believed from the traditions of men. Catholicism, therefore, is the essential heresy, and it alone, though rather because of its political pretensions than of its doctrinal errors, is not to be allowed. Milton deprecates the exercise of violence even toward the Romanists, but is firm in advocating the suppression of their public worship. The pamphlet is, as Masson says, a rather tame one, compared with the two ecclesiastical tracts written in the last days of the Republic.

One further document remains. In the spring of 1674, Milton wrote and published a translation from the Latin of a Polish manifesto entitled *A Declaration of the Election of this present King of Poland, John the III,* i. e., the national hero Sobieski, who had manfully defended his country against the Turks. Milton's interest in the event was because of the instance it afforded of the true ideal of monarchy, when a man universally acknowledged the strongest and most virtuous is elected king by the sovereign people. The implied contrast between the courageous patriot Sobieski and the traitorous idler Charles II was too sharp to be mistaken. With this final recommendation of right reason to his supine countrymen John Milton, weary with approaching death, laid down his pen.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS OF UNCERTAIN DATE

At some interval of leisure during the Commonwealth or early Protectorate, at any rate before his blindness, Milton composed a popular account of Russia—the land, the government, and the people—based on the stories of various explorers which had been printed in Hakluyt's *Voyages,* Purchas's *Pilgrimages* and elsewhere. Such narratives were one of the favorite branches of Milton's reading and the subject of geography was full of appeal to his curiosity and his imagination. He speaks in his preface as though he had projected a series of descriptions of various countries. As in the *History of Britain* he proposes to give a readable and veracious account in small compass, purged of "long stories of absurd superstition, ceremonies, quaint habits, and other petty circumstances

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little to the purpose." The work was published after his death in 1682. The poetic fruits of his study of the voyages had already been garnered in *Paradise Lost.* Two school textbooks—a Latin Grammar in English, and a treatise on logic in Latin—close the list of Milton's original prose works. The first of these, *Accedence Commenced Grammar, Supply'd with sufficient Rules, For the use of such (Younger or Elder) as are desirous, without more trouble than needs to learn the Latin Tongue,* is a fruit of Milton's interest in pedagogy and of his conviction, expressed in the tractate *Of Education,* that an immense amount of time was wasted by the cumbersome methods of Latin instruction then in vogue. It was published in 1669. The *Artis Logicae Plenior Institutio,* published three years later, was a digest of the system of Peter Ramus which had been welcomed by the Protestant universities in opposition to the traditional logic of Aristotle, which was felt to be too much identified with Catholicism. Both works were presumably written in the days when Milton was occupied with the practical work of education.

In 1658 Milton published the first edition of a work on government by Sir Walter Raleigh entitled *The Cabinet Council; containing The Chief Arts of Empire and Mysteries of State.* The manuscript, he says in a foreword, had been given to him by a learned man at his death and had been in his hands many years. Milton was keenly interested in the principles and maxims of civic leadership, as set forth by the statesmen of the Renaissance, witness his careful study of Machiavelli.[25]

There are other records of Milton's intellectual activities

[25] Recorded in the Commonplace Book.

in the form of annotations to volumes which have been preserved from his library, some of them perhaps designed as materials for scholarly editions. We have also his Commonplace Book, consisting of quotations and references from his reading in the fields chiefly of political and ecclesiastical history, arranged under appropriate headings. These notes were, of course, intended for his own use only. The manuscript was discovered and published in 1874.[26] The entries, which date from the Horton period to 1652, or later, are an interesting index of Milton's changing interests and opinions. When arranged chronologically they show him to have been following a consistent program of historical study from the fall of Rome to his own day.[27]

[26] By A. J. Horwood.
[27] Hanford, *Chronology*.

CHAPTER III

THE MINOR POEMS

MILTON'S minor poems in English, Latin, and Italian cover a period of his life from the last year of his attendance at St. Paul's School to the moment at which he undertook the actual composition of *Paradise Lost* (i. e., circa 1655). We are told by Aubrey that he was already a poet at the age of ten, but the earliest verses which have been preserved are two Psalm paraphrases done when he was fifteen years old.

The total body of this work is not large; to Milton himself, who felt, with his contemporaries, that tragedy and epic were the great literary forms, and who deliberately shaped his life toward the highest poetic achievement, this experimental and occasional verse was probably trifling. He cherished it sufficiently, however, to publish the bulk of it in an independent volume in 1645, as an evidence of his youthful poetic promise. A second edition, which appeared in 1673, contained a few additional early pieces and the subsequently composed translations and sonnets.

Though this part of Milton's poetical activity is fairly continuous for the period which it covers, we may observe that there are in it some especially prolific years and some rather notable gaps. Thus, in his eighteenth year, his second at the University, Milton gave himself eagerly to the composition of Latin verse, writing not less than

six poems in this medium. Again in 1629–31, near the end of his residence in Cambridge, he appears to have begun composing in English with a new enthusiasm. At Horton he wrote *Comus* in 1634, and then, except for *Lycidas* in 1637, nothing until his return from Italy, a period of seven years. The more abundant moments of his later life are 1644–46 (six sonnets), April, 1648 (nine Psalms), 1653 (eight Psalms), and 1655–56 (four sonnets).

In the following discussion the poems are arranged chronologically, except that the two early Psalm paraphrases are considered with the translations, most of which belong to the period after 1640, and the few Latin poems of the Horton epoch and later with those written at the University. The two groups of English sonnets are also, for convenience, treated together in a section by themselves.

THE LATIN AND ITALIAN POEMS

Milton divided the Latin poems which he published in the 1645 volume into poems in elegiac meter including eight of his epigrams (*Elegiarum Liber*) and poems in miscellaneous meters (*Sylvarum Liber*). Three epigrams were added in the 1673 edition to the first group and an ode, *Ad Ioannem Rousium,* to the second. In either publication Milton arranges the pieces in an approximately chronological order and he carefully dates many of them, especially those which belong to his earlier college years. These dates are not, however, wholly to be trusted. *Elegies II* and *III,* and the poem, *In Obitum Praesulis Eliensis,* are antedated one year. The apparent regularity of this practice has led editors to assume that Milton's

designation *"anno aetatis* 17," etc., is regularly to be taken as meaning at the age of 17, etc. But the poem on the death of the Vice-Chancellor Gostlin, dated *"anno aetatis* 16," must actually have been composed when Milton was 17 (since Gostlin died in 1626) while the address to Young (*Elegy IV*) dated *"anno aetatis* 18," belongs to the spring of the year 1625. The precise fixing of the chronology of those poems regarding which we have no evidence other than Milton's statement is, therefore, a matter of conjecture, though we may assume that his dates are never more than a year or two out of the way.

Even with this uncertainty the Latin poems constitute an immensely important year-by-year record of Milton's thoughts, feelings, and literary development in the University and Horton periods. Most interesting are the three poems (*Elegies I, V,* and *VII*) in which Milton gives rein to his delight in sensuous beauty and dallies with the thought of love. They should be read in connection with a passage in the *Apology for Smectymnuus,*[1] in which he tells how he was first roused to literary enthusiasm by the amatory poetry of the Roman elegists and inspired to imitate them. Besides the amatory motive these poems contain suggestions of his personal loyalty to his boyhood tutor, Young (*Elegy IV*), his discomfort in the atmosphere of the University and his enthusiasm for the life of cultured and studious leisure (*Elegy I*), his gratitude to his father for providing him with generous opportunities to indulge such tastes (*Ad Patrem*), his pride in his association with a famous Italian patron of the arts (*Manso*). Such works as the poem on the Gunpowder Plot and the elegies commemorating the

[1] Quoted and discussed in Appendix.

deaths of University dignitaries are impersonal academic exercises, done, however, with a zealous enthusiasm for the art of modern Latin composition and often revealing much of Milton's intellectual habit and of the sources of his literary culture.

Two of the later poems, on the other hand, are deeply serious expressions of Milton's innermost emotions. In *Elegy VI* (December, 1629), addressed to Diodati in reply to a letter describing his revels at the Christmas season, he expresses dissatisfaction with the trifling verse he has been composing, announces himself an epic poet, and expresses the resolve to live a life of lofty and ascetic consecration to that end. He describes at the close his first attempt at a kind of poetry worthy of himself, the poem *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity.* Finally, in the *Epitaphium Damonis* (1641), he pays a noble tribute in the form of a carefully wrought pastoral elegy to his friendship for Diodati, telling incidentally of his own over-ambitious poetic flights, now no longer to be shared with the beloved companion of his school and college days. This work is incomparably the best of Milton's Latin poems. In the warmth and tenderness of its personal emotion it is superior to the parallel English elegy, *Lycidas.*

The whole body of Milton's Latin verse represents the finest achievement ever attained in this medium by an Englishman. A great classicist, Professor E. K. Rand,[2] finds it not unworthy of a place beside its ancient models. Milton is at first a follower of the ornate and romantic style of Ovid; his later poems have more of the Virgilian dignity and restraint. He also reflects the work of the

[2] *Milton in Rustication.*

Renaissance humanists, particularly Buchanan, widely known as the most elegant Latin poet of his time. In pouring so much of his own poetic energy into an ancient tongue (to the extent that in his earlier University years he wrote scarcely anything in English) Milton was following the learned precedent of his age. He recognized, however, that English was to be his ultimate medium (witness the verses of his mother tongue inserted in the *Vacation Exercise* of 1628) and he probably regarded Latin composition largely as a way of disciplining his powers. The use of a learned language did, however, give him an opportunity to say some things in a more directly personal way and to indulge the sensuous side of his nature more freely than he would have felt suitable in undraped English.

The Italian sonnets represent a poetical excursion into yet another linguistic medium. There is every reason to believe them a product of Milton's university years and not, as Masson assumed, of his Italian journey. For it is evident from the poems themselves that Milton is writing in an English environment. He is attempting, he says (Sonnet III), to make the flower of a foreign speech grow in a climate not its own; and he pictures himself (Sonnet IV) as surrounded by youths and maidens who expostulate with him for writing in an alien and unintelligible tongue (*lingua ignota e strana*). The poems are, moreover, closely associated in theme and attitude with the Seventh Elegy and they are, like it, addressed to Diodati. Milton tells how Cupid has punished him for his former stubbornness against love. He reveals the name of the lady, Emilia, in riddling fashion in Sonnet I. She is a "type of foreign beauty," a singer and "adorned

with more languages than one." Presumably she is someone whom he had met in the circle of the Diodati family in London. Milton assumes in declaring his passion for her the extravagant attitude of the sonneteer and makes liberal use of the conventional phraseology of Petrarch. The expression, though unoriginal, is full of grace and the language reasonably correct. It seems likely that the pieces are an outcome of Milton's dilettante enthusiasm for the newly discovered delights of the Petrarchan sonnet and a boyishly proud display of his mastery of the tongue best suited to the refinements of poetic love, rather than an expression of any profound personal emotion.

ENGLISH POEMS WRITTEN AT THE UNIVERSITY

"ON THE DEATH OF A FAIR INFANT DYING OF A COUGH." Except for the two psalm paraphrases (see below), which date from his schooldays, this is the earliest of Milton's English poems. It probably belongs to the winter of 1625–26.[3] Milton first printed it in the second (1673) edition of his poems, omitting it from the first perhaps because he thought it immature. Despite its quaintly awkward title and the presence in it of strained images in the poetical fashion of the day it is a sincere and beautiful though not a particularly Miltonic composition, springing from a mood of tender grief and rising in one stanza (No. V), where the poet touches the theme of immortality, to a genuine poetic fervor. We know on the authority of Edward Phillips that the infant was

[3] This is an inference from Milton's designation "anno aetatis 17" and from the fact that the plague, referred to in stanza X, was raging in London at that time.

Milton's own niece, the daughter of his sister Anne, who had married Edward Phillips the elder. The two Phillips boys, Edward and John, were the younger offspring of the same marriage.

Milton employs in this poem a seven line stanza a b a b b c c with a final alexandrine. He probably derived it from Phineas Fletcher, who uses it commonly (with frequent double rhyme, a practice abandoned by Milton after the first stanza) in his *Poetical Miscellanies* and in *Eliza*.[4]

"AT A VACATION EXERCISE IN THE COLLEGE, PART LATIN, PART ENGLISH." This piece was dated by Milton in the 1673 edition of the poems where it first appeared *"anno aetatis 19."* The Latin prolusion (see above, p. 55) with which it belongs is the sixth, where Milton appears as official spokesman in one of the periodic revels of the collegians either in the spring or summer recess. Masson ascribes it on the ground of Milton's heading (assuming as usual that *"anno aetatis 19"* means at the age of 19) and of references in the Latin portion to the year 1628. The Latin text (translated by Masson I, 292) gives the explanation of the last part, in which the poet masquerades as Ens or Being and designates certain of his fellow students as the Aristotelian categories, his sons. The chief significance of the poem is its expression of Milton's patriotic and aesthetic enthusiasm for the English tongue and his declaration of intention to write worthily in it on some lofty theme. Lines 19 ff. give his adverse reaction against the fantastic literary style of the fashionable poetry of the metaphysical school headed by John Donne.

[4] Published in 1633 but doubtless known to Milton in MS.

The meter is the heroic couplet, used loosely according to the practice of such Elizabethans as Jonson. The description of the heavenly and heroic themes which he contemplates (suggestive of the subject matter of Du Bartas as well as of the ancient epic poets) has the true Miltonic ring.

"ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY" and "THE PASSION." Milton printed the great Nativity ode, the first serious and lofty work of his genius, as the opening poem in the 1645 edition with the date 1629. We learn from the close of *Elegy VI* that it was begun before daylight on Christmas morning, "as a birthday gift to Christ." The deeply religious mood in which it was undertaken marks, as we have seen (above, p. 107), not only a feeling appropriate to the season, but a definite abandonment of literary trifling and a consecration of himself to a way of life in harmony with the most serious kind of poetic inspiration. It is to be remembered that the poet had come of age on the 9th of December in the same year.

The subject is a very common one in sixteenth and seventeenth century English poetry. Among the more important of Milton's immediate predecessors who had written of the nativity in independent odes are Jonson, Drummond, Beaumont, Southwell, Sylvester. The theme appears also in Giles Fletcher's *Christ's Victory and Triumph* and, indeed, throughout the religious poetry of the period.

The main features of Milton's treatment of the subject naturally find abundant precedent in this literature, but the only parallel of a significance is with a nativity poem in Tasso's *Rime Sacre,* in which the cessation of the oracles and the overthrow of the Pagan deities of Greece

and Egypt are described in a manner very similar to Milton's. Less specific but equally important is the influence of Virgil's fourth eclogue, prophesying the golden age which was to follow upon the birth of a son to Pollio, a poem universally interpreted as an allegory of the birth of Christ. Milton appears to have regarded the entire body of his youthful work as belonging roughly to the pastoral genre; and the poem *On the Nativity* is, as Professor Rand remarks,[5] "an attempt to match the Pagan Messianic prophecy in a pastoral Birth Song for the real Messiah, in which Christian purity and truth dispense with the gaudy trim of Pagan imagery."

Yet Milton does not escape from the Renaissance habit of employing classical modes of conception for his Christian theme. Christ is for him not the suffering Saviour but the mighty Pan come to dwell kindly among men. The sweetness of the manger scene, so beautifully imaged in Crashaw's nativity ode and in the Christmas carols, gives way to the picture of an infant Hercules who "can in swaddling bands control the damnèd crew" of Satan. Theologically Milton accepts at this time the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. His true theme, however, is the moral significance of Christ, as a symbol of ethical and religious truth, which in its pure simplicity banishes the multiformity of error, typified in the welter of Pagan divinities. Milton is adoring an idea rather than a person. His poem is Protestant and humanistic rather than Catholic in feeling.

In both meter and style *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity* reflects the Spenserian tradition of Milton's principal masters at this time in the art of poetry, Giles and

[5] *Milton in Rustication.*

Phineas Fletcher. The introductory stanzas are in the seven-line rhyme of the earlier piece *On the Death of a Fair Infant.* The Hymn itself employs a form apparently original with Milton, but bearing in the final alexandrine the mark of its ultimate origin in Spenser. The scheme is a6, a6, b10, c6, c6, b10, d8, d12. The style is elaborate and somewhat diffuse. Milton indulges occasionally in the kind of poetic ingenuity which he had apparently condemned in the *Vacation Exercise.* These tricks of thought and expression are Milton's legacy from fashion in a period of his development before he had found his own majestic poetic idiom or even, as he was shortly afterward to do, felt the superiority of the more classical lyric style of the followers of Jonson. The poem is, however, full of preludings of the great Miltonic tone, as in the line "The wakeful trump of doom must thunder through the deep." His later fondness for the resonance and suggestiveness of strange names is also evident (cf. stanzas XXI ff.).

There are also in the poem important anticipations of motives later to be employed in *Paradise Lost.* Thus the idea that the Pagan divinities are in reality demons, suggested in stanzas XXIV–XXV, is the basic principle of the representation of the fallen angels. The conception was a familiar one in Patristic writers. Finally, Milton's introduction of the personifications, Peace, Justice, Truth, and Mercy, shows his familiarity with the allegory of the four daughters of God as developed by medieval writers and revived by Giles Fletcher in *Christ's Victory in Heaven,* whence Milton derived it.[6] The material of this allegory, stripped of its metaphorical

[6] See p. 208.

element, is embodied in the debate in Heaven (*Paradise Lost,* Book III) [7]

The Passion immediately follows *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity* in the 1645 edition and apparently belongs to the following Easter (i. e., April, 1630). It is bound to the preceding work by allusions in the opening lines and by the use of a meter identical with that employed in the introductory portion of the other. The poem represents an attempt to continue the lofty religious vein which Milton had entered upon in earnest of his new consecration in 1629. Quite possibly he projected such a series of commemorations of the divine events at their appropriate anniversaries in the Church calendar as are to be found among the works of Herbert and Donne. The poem *Upon the Circumcision,* discussed in the next section, constitutes a third member of the group. Stanza IV contains a specific reference to Vida's Latin poem, *The Christiad,* which, with Giles Fletcher's *Christ's Victory* and the religious verse of his brother Phineas and of Sylvester, must be counted among the sources of Milton's devotional poetic mood at this period. *The Passion,* however, remained unfinished and Milton appended a note to the effect that he found it "above the years he had when he wrote it." The truth is that the crucifixion was not a congenial theme to him at any time. Even thus early he seems to have felt instinctively that man's salvation depends upon himself and that he needs Christ as a guide and model rather than as a redeemer. His lack of inspiration in *The Passion* is very evident. Both the emo-

[7] For the most learned commentary on the *Nativity* see Cook's *Notes.*

tion and the style are forced, and Milton seems unable to pass beyond the process of introduction into the theme itself.

"SONG ON MAY MORNING." The only evidence for the date of this lovely lyric is its position in the 1645 volume among the university poems. Milton had grouped his more serious religious pieces, including several written in the Horton period, together at the beginning. The lighter verse follows, arranged apparently in chronological order, with this poem at its head. Had it not been composed before the epigram *On Shakespeare* and the two pieces on the *University Carrier* I think he would have placed it after them, with *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, Its purer lyric style, free from conceit and verbal curiosity, is a result of Milton's writing for the moment in the classic Jonsonian rather than in the Fletcherian tradition. He was evidently at this time and for several years to come an eclectic follower of many masters.

"ON SHAKESPEARE." This sixteen-line epigram in heroic couplets was first printed among other commendatory verses prefixed to the second folio of Shakespeare's works in 1632 with the title "An Epitaph on the Admirable Dramatick Poet, W. Shakespeare." It is, however, dated 1630 by Milton himself in the 1645 edition. Since it was very probably written to order for the folio I should assume that Milton's date is, as frequently, a little too early. The idea which Milton elaborates is that of Jonson in his lines on Shakespeare—"Thou art a monument without a tomb—" but the conceit that Shakespeare, by turning his readers to stone, creates for himself a monument was perhaps suggested by the second stanza

of the elegy of William Browne on the Countess of Pembroke.[8] These indications reveal Milton's close familiarity with the English poetry of his day and also his capacity for assimilating and echoing the phrase and thought of other men. Milton's admiration for Shakespeare is sincere, in spite of the implied reservations of other passages in his works. Like every critic for over a century after Shakespeare's death, he praises him as a spontaneous genius rather than as a conscious artist. (cf. *L'Allegro,* lines 133–134.)

"ON THE UNIVERSITY CARRIER." The date of composition of the two poems on this subject is fixed by the death of old Hobson, the carrier, January 1, 1631. They belong with the poem *On Shakespeare* metrically and as examples of the seventeenth century punning and conceited epigram. Milton's attitude, jocose but not unkindly, is similar to that which he had previously taken in the second Latin elegy on the death of the University Beadle. It is characteristic of undergraduate feeling toward those minor academic functionaries who are made butts of ridicule during their careers and offices only to have it faintly remembered at their passing that they were human. This is one of the few places in his work in which Milton exhibits humor unmixed with moroseness.

"AN EPITAPH ON THE MARCHIONESS OF WINCHES-

[8] Originally published in Camden's *Remains,* 1629, p. 336, in the following form:

Marble piles let no man raise
To her name; for after days
Some kind woman, born as she,
Reading this, like Niobe,
Shall turn marble, and become
Both her mourner and her tomb.

TER." The Lady Jane, wife of John Paulet, fifth Marquis of Winchester, died in childbirth, April 15, 1631. The event was celebrated by Ben Jonson, then Poet Laureate, as well as in this lovely elegy of Milton's. It is natural to suppose that the poet was socially acquainted with her family. The poem follows the pure style of the school of Jonson, contrasting sharply in its sweet simplicity of manner with the earlier elegy *On the Death of a Fair Infant*. The opening lines echo Browne's famous epitaph on the Countess of Pembroke. The piece is written in the octosyllabic couplet of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*.[9]

POEMS OF UNCERTAIN DATE, 1629–1634

"L'ALLEGRO" and "IL PENSEROSO." The date of this famous pair of lyrics is purely conjectural. They are commonly ascribed to the beginning of the Horton period, but there is an equal probability of their belonging to some vacation interval in the last years of Milton's University life. We know that Milton had already fallen under the sway of the Jonsonian lyric tradition and had experimented in the octosyllabic couplet. His capacity for a refinement of poetic feeling and expression as exquisite as that found in these poems and his possession of their mood and temper are also confirmed for the University epoch. The motive, a record of aesthetic pleasures, is

[9] To complete the list of English poems written before Milton's retirement at Horton we must add, besides some of those listed as doubtful, the paraphrases on Psalms 114 and 136 (discussed below) and the two sonnets *To the Nightingale* and *On His Being Arrived to the Age of Twenty-Three* (below, p. 135).

identical with that of *Elegy I,* though in that poem Milton's objectivity was disturbed by sensations only faintly traceable in the companion pieces. Finally *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* are not included in the Cambridge MS., a document in which Milton set down practically everything he wrote from the Horton period on. On the other hand, the maturity of style in these poems and the evidence they contain of leisurely reading and enjoyment may be taken as an argument for a later date.

L'Allegro and *Il Penseroso* are the finest expressions of Milton's joyous and sensitive poetic nature at a moment of his life when he could still indulge a dilettante enthusiasm for beauty in nature and all the manifold delights of music, books, society, and self-pleasing reverie without the intrusion either of his moral idealism or of his intenser personal passion. They represent also, in their delicate and flawless lyric technique, the utmost perfection of his youthful art. Milton has worked in a purely objective spirit, composing the materials of his aesthetic life into parallel pictures of contrasting moods. The idea of two persons, the gay and the pensive man, is, of course, a mere device. A catholic artistic taste does not prefer tragedy to comedy, or a somber to a laughing landscape, or society to solitude. It takes its suggestion, rather, from the object and is equally responsive to beauty in its bright and in its sober guise. Such, surely, is Milton's temper, and it is idle to discuss which poem best represents his nature or to regard them as though the contradiction pretended in them were real. The truer interpretation is that which considers the two lyrics as the contrasting movements in a musical composition, and the

titles, suggesting, as they do, the terminology of musical directions,[10] justify a parallel with the sister art which the poet knew so well.

The tradition in which Milton writes is that of the Elizabethan lyric and several definite poems may be indicated as having almost certainly furnished him with suggestions. Chief among these is the piece prefixed to Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy,* entitled *A Dialogue between Pleasure and Pain.* Here, to be sure, the contrasted objects are the painful and the pleasurable types of melancholy; but some of the detail is so similar to Milton's as to make it seem plausible that Burton's poem afforded the initial suggestion for his own. The opening of *Il Penseroso* is plainly reminiscent of a song in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Nice Valour,* in which "vain delights" are banished and "lovely melancholy" welcomed in a formula identical with Milton's. One of Nicholas Breton's lyrics has also been mentioned as resembling *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* and appears to have been in the poet's memory as he wrote.[11] All three of the lyrics mentioned use the dancing octosyllabic measure of Milton's poems. There is no precedent, however, for the precision and comprehensiveness with which Milton marshals his delights, or for the intricate and artful manner in which each detail in one poem is counterpoised in the other. For the exposition of this symmetry the reader is referred to the rough statement of Johnson in his life

[10] For a survey of Milton's employment throughout his works of the technical language of music see Spaeth.

[11] See Lowes, *"L'Allegro and "The Passionate Shepheard."* For another related lyric see Padelford, *An Unnoted Source of "L'Allegro."*

of Milton and to the more delicate one of W. V. Moody in the Cambridge edition.

L'Allegro and *Il Penseroso* have always been among the best loved of Milton's poems. Modern critics have united in praising the perfection of their workmanship and the sweetness of temper revealed in them. Biographers have made them stand (too much so, indeed) for the tone of Milton's Horton period in contrast with the Puritan severity of his later life and work. They represent, after all, but a holiday moment in a life already deeply serious, and to this kind of holiday Milton could always in some degree return. The record which they embody of the poet's youthful culture is complete on one side only. Thus he represents himself in *Il Penseroso* as witnessing tragedy, whether on the stage or in his mind's eye only, as a spectacle of solemn beauty, and as reading Plato in the indulgence of the speculative fancy. But we know that the Greek tragedians were for him first of all "teachers of moral wisdom" and that Plato was already one of his great guides toward truth. It is with a deliberate consistency that he excludes from focus everything which could not consistently be brought within the limits of a fine amateurism. He did so once and once only in these poems.

"AT A SOLEMN MUSIC," "ON TIME," "UPON THE CIRCUMCISION." With these poems we reach the body of material which Milton set down in the manuscript volume now preserved at Trinity College, Cambridge. The order in which the various compositions stand in that document affords some indication of their relative dates, though by no means a complete or certain one. We have also the fact that he arranged the poems in the 1645

edition with some regard to their chronological order; but here, again, the situation is not wholly clear, since he occasionally adopted another principle of arrangement. The earlier items in the MS. are as follows: *Arcades, At a Solemn Music* in three drafts, a prose letter to a friend (see above, p. 13), *On Time, Upon the Circumcision,* three sonnets of later date, copied on a page which had been left blank, *Comus, Lycidas. Comus* is dated 1634. The prose letter contains the sonnet on Milton's twenty-third birthday, i. e., December 9, 1631, described as "my nightward thoughts some time since." The letter itself is apparently a first draft, like *At a Solemn Music. On Time and Upon the Circumcision* are clean copies. They stand after *The Passion* and before *At a Solemn Music* in the 1645 edition. *Arcades,* which, though much corrected in the autograph, hardly looks like a first attempt, is grouped in the edition with *Lycidas* and *Comus,* presumably because of its pastoral character. It is safe to say that no one will succeed in figuring out the precise date and order of the pieces which precede *Comus* in the manuscript; but we are on sure enough ground in ascribing them all to the close of Milton's University career or the beginning of his sojourn at Horton.

With regard to the literary qualities of the three lyrics little need be said. They are in the form of odes with irregular rhyme and line length, a unique experiment for Milton except for the approach to it in *Lycidas.* In his mind they evidently constituted one group with the poems on Christ's birth and death, a body of sacred or at least solemn verse by which he wished his early earnestness to be judged. Though less interesting intrinsically than

On the Morning of Christ's Nativity they are works of a sincere inspiration, in the best vein of seventeenth century meditative poetry. *On Time* has the character of an inscription, as is suggested by its canceled manuscript title "Set on a Clock Case." *At a Solemn Music* bears witness to Milton's enthusiasm for the "sphere-born harmonious sisters voice and verse." Both pieces conclude with the contemplation of Heaven and immortality, a theme much in Milton's thoughts throughout his early life. *Upon the Circumcision* is relatively unattractive. Milton seems to be rather forcing himself to meditate on the significance of an event which has for him little more than a conventional appeal. Here, as in *The Passion,* he shows unconsciously his remoteness from the emotion of religious sorrow.

"ARCADES." This fragment, consisting of three songs and a recitation in pentameter couplets, follows the ten sonnets in the 1645 edition and is, as we have seen, the first item in the Cambridge manuscript. These facts and the evident connection of the piece with *Comus* are the sole basis for the date of composition, which is given by Masson as 1633 or possibly 1634, but by Grierson as 1630 or 1632.[12] According to Milton's own note in the 1645 edition it was "part of an entertainment presented to the Countess Dowager of Derby at Harefield by some noble persons of her family." These noble persons presumably include the family of Sir John Egerton, Earl of Bridgewater, her stepson, for whom Milton wrote *Comus* in 1634. It is probable that Henry Lawes, then musical tutor in the Egerton family, who later superintended the pro-

[12] *The Poems of John Milton,* Preface xiii–xiv.

duction of *Comus,* was also the deviser of this masque. Lawes's friendship with Milton is established by the sonnet addressed to him in 1645. No great degree of intimacy between Milton and the distinguished circle of the Countess of Derby is necessarily implied by his having been engaged to furnish the words for these masques, yet Harefield is but a dozen miles from Horton and some acquaintance may have existed. The Countess of Derby, a daughter of Sir John Spencer of Althorpe, had married Ferdinando Stanley, Lord Strange. To her Edmund Spenser, who counted himself of the same family, had dedicated the *Tears of the Muses* in 1591. By a second marriage in 1600 she had become the wife of Sir Thomas Egerton, Lord Keeper of the Seal. In 1630 she was seventy years old, and it was perhaps the rounding out of her three-score years and ten that gave occasion for the celebration.

Milton's verses present a situation rather than a plot. A group of shepherds have been searching for their Arcadian queen and, finding her in the person of the great lady in whose honor the entertainment is given, they sing her a song of compliment. The Genius of the Wood, a part probably taken by Lawes, enters and addresses her. The conception of such a figure is a familiar one in the masque and is repeated in the Attendant Spirit in *Comus.* In the beautiful song "O'er the smooth enamelled green" he brings the Arcadians to the lady. A dance and a concluding lyric follow. The whole is done in the purest and most delicate Elizabethan vein. The tone is that of the Jonsonian masque, but no specific influences are traceable in Milton's work.

ENGLISH POEMS WRITTEN AT HORTON (1632–1638)

"COMUS." *Comus,* entitled by Milton simply *A Maske,* is dated 1634 in the Cambridge manuscript and in the editions. In 1637 Harry Lawes had the work printed to save the trouble of making transcripts for the many persons who requested copies.[13] Except for the lines to Shakespeare this was Milton's first published work. It reappeared without change in the 1645 and 1673 editions of the poems. A stage copy, in manuscript, in which the Attendant Spirit's epilogue is transferred to the beginning and several passages of the dialogue are cut, was preserved by the Egerton family and has recently been published.[14]

Of the occasion for which *Comus* was written we have only such information as is given in the 1637 and 1645 editions, viz., that it was performed at Ludlow Castle on Michaelmas night (i. e., September 29, 1634) at the inauguration of the Earl of Bridgewater as Lord President of Wales and that the parts of the Lady and her two Brothers were taken by the Earl's three children, the Lady Alice Egerton, Lord Brackley, and Mr. Thomas Egerton. That Lawes, who, as we have seen, was music tutor in the Egerton family, was the producer and that he himself took the part of Thyrsis seems quite certain. In lines 494–95 Milton puts into the mouth of the Elder Brother a graceful compliment to Lawes as a musician. We know

[13] Reproduced in facsimile in Dodd, Mead & Company's *Facsimile Reprints of Rare Books,* 1903. The divergences from the 1645 edition and the Cambridge MS. are interesting. We have in these three versions three stages of the *Comus* text, all Milton's.

[14] Lady Alix Egerton, *Milton's "Comus."*

from the sonnet how much Milton admired his compositions, and Lawes's musical settings of several of the *Comus* lyrics have been preserved.[15] They amply justify his enthusiasm.

Comus is, in point of time, one of the last representatives of the tradition of the English masque, a type of courtly entertainment introduced from Italy in simple form as early as the time of Henry VIII and developed to its highest point of elaboration by Ben Jonson in the reign of James. The masque is essentially a private entertainment, performed, in part at least, by members of society, and depending for its effect largely on music, pageantry, and dance. The courtly dance is, indeed, the essential and original feature. It had become the custom also to introduce a set of comic or grotesque characters, the parts being more often taken by professionals, and to assign them one or more dances of a burlesque character. This humorous element was known as the antimasque. It is represented in *Comus* by the crew of man-monsters who have been transformed by the enchanter and again by the countrymen who do a rural turn at the close. The subject matter of the masque is almost always a combination of mythology and allegory, adapted in the Elizabethan manner to the social occasion for which the masque is written. In the composition of masques delicacy and prettiness rather than dramatic effect are sought for. The poetry, even in the dialogue, has commonly a lyric quality. Milton had plenty of opportunity of seeing masques, particularly those given by the Inns of Court of which his father was presumably a member. He shows close famil-

[15] In the British Museum. They were published for the Milton Tercentenary celebration by Sir Frederick Bridge.

iarity with the tradition and *Comus* illustrates every one of the points made in the above description. There are, however, important differences between *Comus* and the typical masque of the period, differences which spring largely from the strongly individual temper of its author. Milton expands the dialogue portion of the piece far beyond its usual limits and injects into it an earnestness of meaning quite foreign to the tradition. The fable of the masque is characteristically designed to illustrate the triumph of some moral ideal, but usually this is merely conventional. Milton, on the other hand, besides achieving the most exquisite poetic beauty and fulfilling very gracefully all the courtly and complimentary purposes of the masque, succeeds in expressing some of his most intense emotions and ideals.

His theme is the unassailable security of the virtuous mind amid every circumstance of violence and wrong. Specifically he exalts the virtue of chastity, an ideal which, as we know from many sources, was passionately dear to him in his youth. The Lady is little more than a personification of purity; Thyrsis rēpresents the divine protection which surrounds the good; Comus is vice in its seductive form; his monsters' vice in its true brutishness; the Elder Brother is the youth who by the study of philosophy has become secure in his understanding of these truths; the Younger Brother is a nēophyte who has not yet acquired a complete faith. The Platonic doctrine that the condition of the soul reflects itself in the outward form—creates, indeed, the body which is its temple —is implied throughout and specifically set forth in the famous passage beginning with line 453. In the Spirit's epilogue Milton introduces in Pagan terms but with a

Christian meaning the idea of a mystic marriage of the soul with God, the heavenly compensation for a life of chastity on earth.

The question of Milton's literary sources in *Comus* is a particularly interesting one. It so happens that we can trace with more of certainty than in the case of *Paradise Lost* the varied elements, ancient and modern, which his extraordinarily assimilative mind converted to its uses. Such a study serves to illustrate Milton's culture, and also to throw into relief the highly individual quality which his imagination imparts to his materials. For Milton's borrowings, here and elsewhere, are never literal. Even when we are reasonably sure of his indebtedness, the relation is apt to be so distant and intangible that one feels that his recollection must have been an unconscious one.

The mythological groundwork of Milton's story is of course the Circe episode in the *Odyssey* (Book X). In giving an allegorical interpretation to this myth Milton had a precedent in the Platonizing mythographer, Heraclitus Ponticus, of whose *Allegoriae* he is known to have owned a copy.[16] A more immediate suggestion came to him, however, from Spenser, whose Bower of Bliss (*Faerie Queene,* Book II, Canto xii) is presided over by the enchantress Acrasia, a Circe-like figure, the symbol of intemperance, and surrounded by creatures who have been transformed to beasts. That Milton had paid especial attention to the ethical meaning of this passage we know from *Areopagitica.*

Comus himself derives originally from a personification of the Greek common noun κῶμος (revelry), which had already taken place in antiquity. But Milton must have

[16] Sotheby, *Ramblings,* p. 125.

been familiar with the conception from more modern sources. In Ben Jonson's masque, *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* (1619), Comus appears as a glutton. In a neo-Latin play, the *Comus* of Erycius Puteanus (Hendrik van der Putten), he is an embodiment of a more refined sensuality and, as with Milton, a magician. The resemblances between Milton's *Comus* and this document are too striking to be the result of accident. The author sees in vision a riotous banquet in which Comus, an embodiment of intemperate pleasure, has as his guests various personified pleasures and passions. An old man declaims against the various vices and attacks the ideals held by the revelers. Some specific parallels in the speeches of *Comus* are pointed out by Todd. But whatever precedents Milton may have had for his chief character, he is apparently original in making Comus a son of Circe and Bacchus.

The central fiction of the masque, the abduction and rescue of the Lady, has many analogues. The closest is George Peele's *Old Wives Tale,* where two brothers go in search of their sister, Delia, who has been imprisoned by an enchanter. He gives her a magic potion causing her to forget her brothers and rather feebly endeavors to win her to his lust. They meet an old man who knows the arts of magic and enlist his aid, but are themselves enthralled and goaded to labor by their enchanted sister. The release of all three comes when the magician's glass containing a light is broken by the wife of the old man and his wreath and sword possessed by a dead man, Jack. A dance of harvestmen and an echo dialogue offer slight parallels to incidents in *Comus.* The main action of the play is much obscured by the introduction of various

unrelated episodes. Milton very probably took the suggestion for his plot situation from Peele's play. Here again, however, his elaboration of the material was partly determined by his beloved author Spenser. In *The Faerie Queene* (Book III, Canto xii) the chaste Florimel is imprisoned by a magician in a castle symbolizing lust. She sits like the Lady in *Comus,* robbed of her power of motion, on a throne before her captor, who endeavors to force her to do his will. Her rescuer, breaking in, compels the enchanter to release her by saying his charms backward. Cf. *Comus,* lines 815–817:

> Without his rod reversed,
> And backward mutters of dissevering power,
> We cannot free the Lady that sits here.

Another practically certain influence is Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess,* a pastoral drama with a decidedly masque-like tone. If, however, in moulding his drama, Milton is mainly under the sway of the Elizabethans, his classical predilections lead him to make it conform, wherever possible, to classical precedent. Clear traces of ancient dramatic practice are to be found in the Euripidean prologue, in the somewhat riddling dialogue in which each speech is exactly a line's length (stichomythia) in lines 227–290, and in the deliberate use of irony in lines 657–658.[17]

When all these relationships (and others less tangible might be mentioned) are taken into account, the paramount influence remains, I believe, that of Spenser. Besides the points already mentioned there is a clear re-

[17] For further parallels with Euripides see Sandys' edition of the *Bacchae,* notes to lines 188, 234, 314.

lation between Spenser's Garden of Adonis (*Faerie Queene,* III, vi) and the description of the paradise of heavenly love at the close of *Comus.* For one episode, that of Sabrina, Milton directly refers to Spenser as his source (cf. *Faerie Queene* Book II, Canto x), though, of course, he knew it also in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *British History.* His use in this connection of the pastoral name Meliboeus is analogous to Spenser's own praise of Chaucer as Tityrus and suggests that Milton recognized a kindred discipleship.[18] He later told Dryden that Spenser was his original. We know from other evidence that this discipleship was in 1634 a rather recent thing, partly superseding Milton's earlier literary devotion to the Fletchers. It seems quite clear that Spenser was of the greatest value to Milton at this time in helping him interpret his genius to himself, in fostering his poetical idealism and his enthusiasm for purity, in teaching him how to give concrete literary embodiment to Platonism, and, specifically, in furnishing him with no small part of the substance of *Comus.* The passage already referred to in *Areopagitica* in which he calls "our sage and serious Spenser" a "better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas" shows that he chiefly valued him for his power of giving beauty and concreteness by the aid of poetry to spiritual and philosophic truth. The same attitude is reflected in the reference in *Il Penseroso:*

> Or if aught else great bards beside
> In *sage and solemn* tune have sung.

In the account of his developing personal ideals in the *Apology for Smectymnuus* Milton says that the solemn

[18] See Bense, *"Meliboeus old" in Milton's "Comus"* for proof of the identification with Spenser.

cantos of the fables and romances of knighthood (by which he evidently means chiefly the *Faerie Queene*) taught him the beauty of the virtue of chastity.[19] All of which instructs us to look to Spenser as one of the greatest moulding influences in Milton's youthful experience, and a chief inspirer of his poetry in the Horton period and thereafter—and this in spite of the fact that Milton's taste was leading him more and more away from the somewhat exuberant manner of expression which Spenser employed and passed on to his successors. The style of *Comus,* like that of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso,* has its affinities with the Elizabethan and Jonsonian lyric and masque. It is not, save in a passage or two, Miltonic in the later sense, yet, with all its grace and delicacy, it has a quality of logical exactness and a condensation which are a fruit of Milton's classical self-discipline.

"LYCIDAS." The exact date of the composition of *Lycidas* is fixed by the canceled superscription in the Cambridge manuscript, "November, 1637." Edward King, the alumnus of Christ's College in whose memory the poem was written, had been drowned in the Irish sea on August 10 of the same year. *Lycidas* was first printed with the initials J. M. as the last poem in a collection of memorial verses, Latin, Greek, and English, entitled *Obsequies to the Memory of Mr. Edward King, Anno Dom. 1638.* Milton republished it with minor alterations in the volume of 1645. The manuscript contains, beside the record of these later changes, many revisions made during the process of composition, material of the keenest interest to the student of the poetic art. We learn, for example, that the flower passage was an afterthought and we can

[19] See Appendix.

trace the phrasing of many another passage through various stages on the way to its final perfection.[20] A few corrections are inserted in Milton's hand in a copy of the 1638 edition. One of these "he well knew" for "he knew," in line 10, failed to get into the 1645 text, but it is confirmed by the manuscript and should undoubtedly be incorporated in modern editions.

In form *Lycidas* is a pastoral elegy, embodying a set of conventions[21] which had gradually become fixed in poetic usage from antiquity. Chief among these are the fiction that all nature mourns the dead shepherd's loss, the question "where were ye, Nymphs," the procession of appropriate mourners, each uttering his grief, the pastoral consolation or change of tone from sadness to joy in the thought of the dead shepherd's immortality. Most of these features are embodied also in the parallel elegy, *Epitaphium Damonis*. Their ultimate classical origins may be sought in the second Idyll of Theocritus, Moschus's *Elegy on Bion,* Bion's own *Lament for Adonis,* and the fifth and tenth eclogues in Virgil's *Bucolics*. To these conventions the Renaissance added the representation of the association between the poet and his friend as a companionship of shepherds feeding their flocks, and the tendency to introduce allegorically an attack on the corruptions of the Church. Milton probably knew, among the multitude of pastorals written in his own age, those of Petrarch, in which this material is prominent; he certainly knew the *Shepherd's Calendar* of Spenser, where,

[20] For a study of the alterations see Lockwood, *Milton's Corrections to the Minor Poems.*

[21] See Hanford, *The Pastoral Elegy and Milton's "Lycidas,"* and especially Norlin, *The Conventions of the Pastoral Elegy.*

besides much ecclesiastical allegory, there is a meditation on fame which parallels that in *Lycidas*. The November eclogue in the *Shepherd's Calendar* is an elegy and from it Milton borrowed a turn or two of phrase. He appears also to have been indebted to Castiglione's Latin Elegy, *Alcon*. Milton makes no effort to avoid these precedents; indeed, he rejoices in them. Artistically the conventionalism of the pastoral disguise serves as a decent drapery of grief, softening the outlines of the poet's emotion, depersonalizing and idealizing it, without entirely robbing it of poignancy. The pastoral tradition justified also the introduction of thinly concealed personal digression. The theme is apt to be as much the poet's own ambitions and disappointments as it is the praise of his dead friend. Thus Milton, in writing *Lycidas,* is, like Shelley in *Adonais,* primarily taking account of the meaning of the experience to himself. King is the poet who has been cut off in the midst of his youthful promise by the hand of fate. Of what use is high endeavor when life is subject to such accidents? The answer is Milton's first great confession of faith—in himself and his earnest way of life, in God and immortality. The rebuke administered to the corrupt clergy is an echo of his own determination not to go into the church. At the close he turns toward his own future, chastened and strengthened by the experience. It is untrue to say that the emotion in *Lycidas* is not intense. Though Milton feels the loss of King less personally than he was later to feel that of his intimate companion Diodati, he is sincerely touched by the melancholy of the event and is even more profoundly moved by the realization of the fact of death.

As a work of art *Lycidas,* in spite of the disparage-

ment of Johnson, who was offended by its pastoralism, has received almost universal praise. Mark Pattison says that it is the high-water mark of English poetry and its full enjoyment a final fruit of literary culture. The style, though always laden with ornament and allusion, varies with the mood, rising and falling, as Milton "somewhat loudly sweeps the string" in moments of exaltation and denunciation, or bids his Muse return again to the pastoral strain with its subdued note of tender melancholy. The analogy of music again occurs to mind as one considers the masterly way in which Milton has managed these fluctuations. No symphony was ever composed of more varied emotional elements or blended them more consummately into artistic unity. Metrically *Lycidas* is a combination of regularity and freedom. The verse is prevailingly iambic pentameter varied occasionally by the introduction of three-foot lines. The rhyme varies from the couplet form to intricate stanzaic arrangements, with a sprinkling of unrhymed lines. The poem closes with a stanza in *ottava rima.* In general Milton's formal models here are to be found in the metrical practice of contemporary Italian poetry. A more essential feature than the rhyme scheme, however, is Milton's handling of the metrical pauses and his tendency to prolong his cadences through a succession of lines in what Masson calls a series of free rhythmic paragraphs. It is in *Lycidas* that Milton's verse first takes on the characteristic qualities of rich and sonorous harmony for which we have no other word than Miltonic. These qualities, which I shall attempt to analyze later,[22] proceed fundamentally from the constitution of his mind, but the blank verse of Chris-

[22] Chapter VII.

topher Marlowe and the mellow cadences of Virgil have had no slight share in their making.

Lycidas bears its meaning plainly enough on its face, and there has been little room for disagreement regarding its larger features. There are, however, a few famous cruxes in particular passages. Among them is the line "Oft till the star that rose at evening bright," which is to be interpreted as referring to the evening planet appearing, rather than strictly rising, high in the heavens at dusk and setting after dark. The time during which the shepherds prolong their labors would be not all night but till a late hour. More difficult is the "two-handed engine" in line 130, which has been variously interpreted. As a matter of fact, Milton probably intended to leave the reference menacingly vague.

THE SONNETS

Milton's twenty-four sonnets fall into several chronological groups. Six of these, the sonnet "To the Nightingale" and the five Italian sonnets with the Canzone are undoubtedly the product of his last years at the University. Sonnet VII, "How soon hath Time," was written on his twenty-third birthday. Sonnet VIII, "Captain or Colonel or Knight at Arms," belongs to the year 1642. Sonnets IX and X, "Lady that in the prime of earliest youth" and "Daughter to that good Earl," followed in 1644. This whole group was published consecutively in the 1645 volume of the poems. The composition of the remaining fourteen fell between 1645 and 1658.[23] Four

[23] For a discussion of the dates of the sonnets see Stevens, *The Order of Milton's Sonnets,* and the introduction to Grierson's edition.

of these remained unprinted until 1694, having been omitted from the 1673 volume for political reasons.

The Italian poems have already been discussed. The nightingale sonnet belongs with them in spirit and style and constitutes an introduction to the series. In it Milton follows the Petrarchan tradition and writes himself gracefully into the rôle of courtly lovers. The later English sonnets, beginning with the one on his twenty-third birthday, reflect a complete change of attitude. The romantic note disappears entirely, the style is plain and direct, with none of the conventional phraseology which belongs to the tradition. They are the most immediately personal of all Milton's utterances, representing emotional moments in his later life experience which find no adequate expression in the prose writing and publication with which he was during these years primarily engaged. We may believe also that they were, like the Psalms, prompted in part by a conscious desire in Milton to exercise himself in verse in preparation for the epic poem which he still intended.

Volumes have been written in discussion of Milton's sonnets, but their definitive treatment has been the work of the late Mr. J. S. Smart,[24] who has cleared away much error regarding their relation to literary tradition and has explained many obscure details of their meaning. He points out that Milton characteristically makes use of the form at a time when its vogue has already passed. His formal model is not the English sonnet, with its tendency to close with a couplet, but the Italian originals which, on the whole, avoided such an ending. It is not true that he violates Italian precedent by failing to preserve a rhetorical

[24] *The Sonnets of Milton.*

pause at the exact conclusion of the octave. This is a principle of Petrarch but not of some Italian sonneteers, including Giovanni della Casa, a volume of whose poetry has survived from Milton's library.[25] His dedication of the sonnet to other themes than that of love is not an innovation, as it is so often said to be. Tasso, one of Milton's favorite authors, has a division of heroical sonnets on subjects like Milton's address to Cromwell, and even the Elizabethan tradition, though mainly so, is not by any means exclusively amatory. Yet, on the whole, Milton's sonnets strike a new note of lofty dignity conformable to his epic personality and justify Wordsworth's description:

> In his hands
> The Thing became a trumpet; whence he blew
> Soul-animating strains—alas, too few!

This applies primarily to the group in which he touches on great public events and personalities: the sonnets to Cromwell, Vane, and Fairfax, and the one on the late massacre in Piedmont. Those in which he expresses a more personal emotion—the sonnet *On his being arrived to the Age of Twenty-three,* the two poems on his blindness, and the one written in memory of his second wife—combine a poignant pathos with an earnest ethical and religious idealism. The addresses to Lawes, Skinner, Henry (not Edward) Lawrence, Lady Margaret Ley, and the unidentified virtuous young Lady of Sonnet IX, also the elegy for Mrs. Katharine Thomason, are pitched in lower key, but they are beautifully expressive of a genial friendliness and a warm glow of human sympathy quite at variance with the common impression of Milton as a harsh and aus-

[25] It is now in the New York Public Library.

tere Puritan. The two sonnets on the reception of his divorce pamphlets and the twenty-line sonnet (*caudata*) *On the New Forcers of Conscience under the Long Parliament* are a revelation of the poet's capacity for scathing denunciation. The whole group is a perfect record of Milton's unique personality in all its varying moods. The workmanship throughout is finished to the last degree [26] and each poem, even the least of them, is a memorable and impressive work. Samuel Johnson's disparagement of the sonnets ("of the best it can only be said that they are not bad") is one of the strangest literary judgments on record. The history of their influence tells a very different story. It was Milton rather than the Elizabethans who set the style of English sonnet at its revival toward the end of the eighteenth century.[27] The importance of Milton's sonnets as the chief inspiring force and model of those of Wordsworth is well known.

THE PSALMS AND OTHER TRANSLATIONS

The task of reducing the Psalms to regular meters, whether as a literary exercise or for the purpose of better adapting them to congregational singing, seems to us now of all literary endeavors the most vain and forbidding. Yet it was little less than a passion with Milton's predecessors and contemporaries. He himself tried his hand at it on three different occasions in his life, each time with a somewhat different motive and result.

In 1624 at the age of fifteen (if one can trust the statement prefixed to the poems in the 1645 edition) he wrote

[26] The most elaborate analysis of the technique of Milton's sonnets is to be found in the introduction to Pattison's edition.
[27] See Chapter VIII.

paraphrases on Psalms CXIV and CXXVI. These compositions derive a special interest from the fact that they constitute Milton's earliest preserved poetry of any sort. They may be school exercises, but it seems more likely that they were written under the encouragement of Milton's father, who was interested in the composition of psalm tunes, contributing several to Ravenscroft's Psalter, which was published in 1621. There are traces in their phraseology (e. g., in the use of such epithets as "froth-becurled") of Milton's early fondness for Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas's *La Semaine*.[28] In several expressions, moreover, he appears to be following Buchanan's versions of the Psalms in Horatian meters, which were much admired for their elegant Latinity and sometimes read in schools. Despite their lack of originality Milton's renderings have a freedom of rhythm and an eloquence of language which marks them as the products of a genuine if immature poetic enthuiasm.

The second set of translations comprising Psalms LXXX to LXXXVIII, was first published in the 1673 edition of the poems with the caption "Nine of the Psalms done into Meter, wherein all but what is in a different character, are the very words of the Text, translated from the original." They are, in fact, more literal and less eloquent than the two youthful Psalms. Milton's purpose in writing them probably was to supply a version at once accurate and doctrinally sound to supplant the old Sternhold and Hopkins Psalter for congregational singing. He accordingly adopted the common service meter (8+6). It is pointed out that Milton's rendering of the Hebrew is sometimes mistaken and evidence has been adduced to

[28] See the parallels in Dunster, *Considerations.*

show that he resorted to the Vulgate for assistance.[29] It seems likely, however, that he was as competent as anyone in his time to interpret his originals, and the errors seem, in some cases, at least, to be due to the recollection of a phrase from some other version that was familiar to him.[30]

Finally, in 1653, on almost successive days, he turned Psalms I to VIII into a variety of metrical and stanzaic forms, no two being exactly the same. One surmises that he had resumed his task this time as a means of amusement and spiritual consolation in the early period of his blindness. The attempt to follow the Hebrew with minute fidelity is now abandoned; occasional touches reveal the degree to which Milton is reading his own experiences into the psalmist's cry to God out of the anguish of his soul.

A single non-Scriptural translation appeared in the 1673 edition, the remarkably ingenious version of Horace's *"Quis multa gracilis,"* "rendered almost word for word without Rhyme according to the Latin Measure, as near as the Language will permit." Other fragmentary bits (generally in blank verse) from classic and Italian authors are scattered through the prose.

[29] Baldwin, *Milton and the Psalms.*

[30] For a discussion of Milton's relation to earlier versions see Studley, *Milton and his Paraphrases of the Psalms.*

CHAPTER IV

PARADISE LOST

COMPOSITION AND PUBLICATION

STEPS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MILTON'S PLAN. The story of the evolution of *Paradise Lost* in Milton's mind is an intimate and vital part of his biography for a period of over a quarter of a century. The record of his preliminary meditation of the project is to be found chiefly in his published writings and in his preserved manuscript notes. This record, including his early deliberations as to a choice of subject, is here given chronologically and in considerable detail.

1628. *Vacation Exercise.* Milton expresses his ambition to employ the English language in some lofty subject comparable to the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey.*

December, 1629. *Elegy VI.* Milton dedicates himself to the seriousness of epic as opposed to the lightness of elegiac poetry and prescribes for himself a way of life appropriate to such an ambition. For the later account in the *Apology for Smectymnuus* of the resolution thus taken on his twenty-first birthday and of the steps which led to it see Appendix.

1637. *Lycidas.* The poet complains in the opening lines that the sad occasion of the death of Edward King has compelled him to write again before his time. The di-

gression on fame and the closing line "To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new" illustrate his mood.

1639–40. *Mansus.* He announces the legendary history of Britain as his theme. "I will some day recall in song the things of my native land, and Arthur, who carried war even into fairyland. Or I shall tell of those great-hearted champions bound in the society of the Round Table, and (O may the Spirit be in me!) I shall break the Saxon phalanxes with British war."

1640. *Epitaphium Damonis.* Milton implies that he has made a first attempt at the Arthurian Epic and describes his proposed subject more fully as embracing the history of the Britons from the landing of Brutus to the times of Arthur.

1642. *Reason of Church Government.* Milton makes an important statement regarding the function and purpose of poetry as he has proposed it for himself, showing, incidentally, that he is now undecided both as to the form and substance of his work. The passage is given in full in the Appendix.

1640–42. *The Cambridge Manuscript.* Shortly after his return from Italy, Milton set down a list of ninety-nine possible literary subjects from Biblical and British history: some of them merely indicated, some already developed into tentative outlines. All the plans are for dramas, but it is possible that there was a similar list of epic themes which has not been preserved.[1] The subject of the fall of man evidently now holds first place in his thoughts. His successive redraftings of the plan for a drama on this theme constitute the first definite step in the composition of *Paradise Lost.* Phillips reports

[1] Gilbert, *The Cambridge Manuscript.*

that he actually wrote at this time a version of Satan's address to the sun (*Paradise Lost* Book IV, lines 30–41) as the opening of such a drama. The four outlines in order of composition are as follows:

FIRST DRAFT (*canceled*) [2]

the Persons

Michael
Heavenly Love
Chorus of Angels
Lucifer
Adam, Eve } with the serpent
Conscience
Death
Labour
Sicknesse, Discontent, Ignorance, with others } Mutes
Faith
Hope
Charity

SECOND DRAFT (*canceled*) [2]

the Persons

Moses
Wisdom, Justice, Mercy
Heavenly Love
The Evening Star Hesperus
Chorus of Angels
Lucifer
Adam
Eve
Conscience
Labour, Sicknesse, Discontent, Ignorance, Feare, Death } Mutes
Faith
Hope
Charity

THIRD DRAFT

The Persons. Moses προλογίζει recounting how he assum'd his true bodie, that it corrupts not because of his

[2] From the Facsimile of the Cambridge MS. edited by W. A. Wright.

. . . with god in the mount declares the like of Enoch and Eliah, besides the purity of the pl[ace] that certaine pure winds, dues, and clouds praeserve it from corruption whence . . .[3] [ex]horts to the sight of god, tells they cannot se Adam in the state of innocence by reason of thire sin.

Justice
Mercie
Wisdome } debating what should become of man if he fall

Chorus of Angels sing a hymne of the creation.

Act 2

Heavenly Love
Evening starre
chorus sing the mariage song and describe Paradice.

Act 3

Lucifer contriving Adams ruine
Chorus feares for Adam and relates Lucifers rebellion and fall

Act 4

Adam
Eve } fallen

Conscience cites them to gods examination
Chorus bewails and tells the good Adam hath lost

Act 5

Adam and Eve, driven out of Paradice presented by an angel with Labour griefe hatred Envie, warre, famine, Pestilence

[3] "Heavenly Love" canceled.

sicknesse
discontent
Ignorance
Feare
Death
} mutes to whom he gives thire names likewise winter, heat Tempest etc. entered into the world

Faith
Hope
Charity
} comfort him and instruct him

Chorus briefly concludes

FOURTH DRAFT.[4]

Adam Unparadised. The Angel Gabriel, either descending or entering—showing, since this globe was created, his frequency as much on Earth as in Heaven—describes Paradise. Next the Chorus, showing the reason of his coming—to keep his watch in Paradise, after Lucifer's rebellion, by command from God—and withal expressing his desire to see and know more concerning this excellent and new creature, Man. The Angel Gabriel, as by his name signifying a Prince of Power, tracing Paradise with a more free office, passes by the station of the Chorus, and, desired by them, relates what he knew of Man, as the creation of Eve, with their love and marriage.—After this, Lucifer appears, after his overthrow; bemoans himself; seeks revenge upon Man. The Chorus prepare resistance at his first approach. At last, after discourse of enmity on either side, he departs; whereat the Chorus sings of the battle and victory in Heaven against him and his accomplices, as before, after the first Act, was sung a hymn of the Creation.—Here again may

[4] Masson's modernized transcript, corrected by the MS.

appear Lucifer, relating and insulting in what he had done to the destruction of Man. Man next and Eve, having been by this time seduced by the Serpent, appears confusedly, covered with leaves. Conscience, in a shape, accuses him; Justice cites him to the place whither Jehovah called for him. In the meantime the Chorus entertains the stage and is informed by some Angel of the manner of the Fall. Here the Chorus bewails Adam's fall.—Adam then and Eve return and accuse one another; but especially Adam lays the blame to his wife—is stubborn in his offence. Justice appears, reasons with him, convinces him. The Chorus admonisheth Adam, and bids him beware Lucifer's example of impenitence.—The Angel is sent to banish them out of Paradise; but, before, causes to pass before his eyes, in shapes, a masque of all the evils of this life and world. He is humbled, relents, despairs. At last appears Mercy, comforts him, promises him the Messiah; then calls in Faith, Hope, Charity; instructs him. He repents, gives God the glory, submits to his penalty. The Chorus briefly concludes.—Compare this with the former Draft.

Circa 1642. Edward Phillips states that Milton showed him the opening verses of his tragedy.

STAGES IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE POEM. There is no evidence as to the exact time when Milton finally determined to throw his material into epic form. Deeply engaged though he was from 1641 on with prose controversy and the affairs of the Commonwealth, it is probable that his literary purposes were often in his mind. Its actual composition was not, however, begun until the period of leisure following upon the termination of his literary war with Morus in 1655 and the appoint-

ment of Andrew Marvel as assistant Latin Secretary in 1657.

Aubrey, on the oral authority of Edward Phillips, states that the poem was begun about two years before the king came in, i. e., about May, 1658. Phillips in his published life of Milton is less definite. It seems improbable that Milton had progressed far in the work before the stormy and dangerous moment of the Restoration intervened again to disturb him. Masson guesses that Books I and II might have been complete before this event and the poem resumed after Milton had been released from custody and become permanently domiciled in Jewin Street. He points with good reason to a passage in the invocation of Book VII:

> On evil days though fallen, and evil tongues,
> In darkness, and with dangers compassed round;

as clearly reflecting Milton's situation after the Restoration.

The poem is said by Aubrey to have been finished in 1663. It was certainly complete before the autumn of 1665, when Thomas Ellwood, according to a well-known anecdote recorded in his autobiography,[5] was handed the manuscript by Milton at Chalfont St. Giles. The minimum period probably covered by its composition was, therefore, some five years, with interruptions. For the recorded details of Milton's habits of dictation, etc., see above, pp. 44 ff.

[5] "After some discourse had passed between us, he called for a manuscript of his; which being brought, he delivered to me. . . . When I came home and had set myself to read it, I found it was that excellent poem which he entitled 'Paradise Lost.'" Ellwood's *Life*, quoted by Masson, VI, 496.

PUBLICATION. *Paradise Lost* was published in 1667. The articles of agreement (now in the British Museum) between Milton and his printer, Samuel Symmons, are dated April 27;[6] the poem is entered in the Stationers' Register August 20. The actual printing of the work presumably followed in the autumn. Thirteen hundred copies had been sold by April, 1669, when Milton received the second payment of five pounds due to him according to the agreement. Of this first impression only a part was actually put on sale in 1667. The printer issued subsequent installments from time to time with different title pages. Accordingly, the preserved copies of the first edition bear varying dates—1667, 1668, and 1669. In some cases Milton's name is used; in others, simply his initials. For the 1668 issue Milton added the arguments to the various books, printed together at the beginning of the volume, and the prefatory note on the verse.

The second edition appeared in 1674, the year of Milton's death. Besides making a few textual changes and distributing the arguments in their proper places throughout the poem, Milton now divided Books VII and X into two each, thereby making an epic of twelve books instead of the original ten.

The original manuscript of *Paradise Lost* is not preserved. There is, however, in the Morgan library in New York a fair copy of Book I. This transcript is generally supposed to have been prepared not for the press but for inspection by the licenser, whose "imprimatur" it bears.

[6] Facsimile in Sotheby, *Ramblings,* Plate XVIII.

EXPOSITORY OUTLINE

BOOK I. Following the practice of Homer and Virgil, Milton begins with a statement of his theme (lines 1–5): the fall of man in Adam, who is at once the progenitor and the representative of the race, the cause and type of human sin. Consideration of this subject carries the Christian inevitably on to the redemption, without which sin is unintelligible in a world governed by a wise and merciful Providence. Milton thus affirms (lines 24–5) that his purpose in the poem is to assert Providence as opposed to Fate and to "justify," i. e., to make apparent the justice of, God's dealings with men.

In the invocation to the Muse (lines 6–23) Milton follows a poetic tradition adopted from antiquity—not conventionally, but in such a way as to fill it with significance. The Heavenly Muse (i. e., Urania, originally the Muse of astronomy) is in reality that divine inspiration which revealed the truths of religion to Moses. It is also the spirit of God which dwells in the heart of every believer. In Christian terminology it is the Holy Ghost. Milton's invocations are, therefore, really prayers.

The studied and significant parallelism with ancient epic continues (lines 27–49) in the adoption of the formula "what cause?" and its answer, "the infernal serpent," the origin of whose malice, viz., pride and ungrateful rebellion, is here briefly alluded to, and the proper subject of the poem is begun at the logical point, the moment when Satan recovering from the confusion of his grand defeat raises his head from the burning lake.

Surveying with comprehensive sweep the fearful scene about him, he beholds Beëlzebub, called the prince of

Devils in Scripture. His address, couched in language of unrivaled grandeur, is expressive of the situation and of the human passions which dwell with superhuman intensity in his heart. At the root of his sense of the glory of the attempt, and of his determination to persist, is the fundamental perversion of his will. This, in turn, implies a perversion of the intellect, for his language shows that he has lost his original comprehension of God and has attributed to him motives and a being like his own. He falls into the heresy of the Manichees who held the angels to be coexistent with God, attributes his own creation to Fate, and proclaims his independent immortality. He thus manifests himself as the "father of lies," though at first our perception of his true nature is swallowed up in admiration of the heroic "virtue" which he brings with him as mark and seal of his divine origin.

Beëlzebub (lines 124–155), though he holds the same fatalistic creed as his lord, is inferior in his ability to face the situation. Satan meets his pessimism (lines 157–190) with a superb expression of resolute opposition to the will of God, and proposes the terms of the eternal warfare between good and evil (lines 162–168). His utterance reaches its highest pitch of glory when, standing at length on the burning shore, he welcomes the appalling region as his future home (lines 241–270), expressing the great principle of the supremacy of soul over its environment. Milton's own passion for liberty is embodied in Satan's "Here at least we shall be free." In the following address to the host (lines 315 ff.) he assumes the rôle of an inspiring leader rousing his troops from lethargy by stinging words and filling them with his own great spirit.

Descriptions of the landscape of Hell and of the personal appearance of Satan and his lieutenants are interspersed artistically through the action. Thus we are given at first the general impression of the fiery gulf in which the devils lie confounded, and of the "darkness visible" of the infernal region (lines 50 ff.), then the more specific image of Satan, prone on the flood, with head uplifted, then further details progressively, as the leaders, followed by their legions, rise from the lake and take their places on the burning plain. Elaborate and suggestive similes, more abundant here than in any other portion of the poem, enrich the description at every point. The comparison drawn by Macaulay between the vast indefiniteness of Milton's pictures and the detailed realism of Dante's treatment of his corresponding material in the *Inferno* is fundamentally sound.

Having assembled the infernal host, Milton proceeds to an enumeration, following the precedent of Homer's catalogue of ships and heroes in the second book of the *Iliad*. The names are drawn partly from Scripture, and partly from Egyptian and Greek mythology, on the theory, already adopted in the poem on the nativity, that the divinities worshiped by the idolaters of Palestine and by the Pagans generally were in reality the fallen angels who had subsequently seduced mankind from allegiance to the true God. The marshaling of the multitude in military order is followed by further description of their dread commander and by a more reasoned but not less passionate address, as of a general who knows that his first task in war is to secure by eloquence the devotion of his men to the purposes for which he wishes to employ them. The account of the building of Pandemonium (lines 670 ff.), in

form a Doric temple, and of the miracle whereby the chosen representatives of the army are transformed to Pygmean size that they may be housed within the council chamber (lines 775 ff.)—a wholesale metamorphosis unknown to Ovid—brings the book to a close. Lest, however, the concluding impression should be one of littleness, Milton leaves his great leaders unchanged, presenting us with a final image of their mighty presences seated "far within" and ready for the "great consult."

BOOK II. The narrative and descriptive elements which have bulked large in Book I now give way to a primarily dramatic representation of the infernal council—a superhuman parliamentary debate as majestic in eloquence as it is momentous in the consequences involved. Milton brings to bear upon the account a lifelong study of statesmanship and oratory in ancient and modern books, supported by the memory of his experience with the leaders of the Revolution. His council is a magnified image of those human deliberations on which the fates of nations hang. As often in the public affairs of men, the assembly is secretly dominated by a single master will. Individuals may voice their convictions and display their passions, each with a type of eloquence appropriate to his personal character and temper, but the ultimate policy is predetermined. Satan, in opening the debate (lines 11 ff.), assumes that all are with him in the purpose of recovery and revenge. The choice which is offered is one of means —open war or covert guile. Moloch, with the characteristic impetuosity and bluntness of a mere soldier, advises an immediate attack (lines 51 ff.)—an unreasoning counsel of desperation delivered with a brevity and force

which reminds one of the oratory of Oliver Cromwell. Belial, the smooth-tongued trimmer, winding his way subtly into the argument, recommends a policy of peace to which his slothful and luxurious temper predisposes him (lines 119 ff.). The two represent contrasting types of public leaders, the jingo with his instinctive advocacy of violence and the plausible but cowardly counselor of peace at any price. Mammon, the third speaker, builds upon the sentiments of Belial, which have commended themselves to the audience, still smarting from their recent defeat, with a more constructive suggestion. Let them give up war and make the most of Hell, availing themselves of its resources, exploiting its hidden riches, acclimating themselves to an environment which can at least be made to satisfy the impulse to possess and to create (lines 229 ff.). Such advice, from him who afterward became the Pagan god of wealth, is greeted with a murmur of approval, and public opinion seems to be dangerously drifting in a direction contrary to the intention of Satan, when Beëlzebub, the type of subservient politician, as responsive to the purposes of his master as badness could desire, rises clad in the aspect of impressive statesmanship to stem the tide (lines 310 ff.). He introduces into the discussion a new fact, craftily held back till the progress of the debate demanded it—the existence of an undefended world peopled by creatures liable to attack—a matchless opportunity for the satisfaction of a revenge as fierce as Moloch's by means as safe as Belial's and with a possibility of profit more rich than that contemplated by Mammon. His proposal promptly voted, it remains for Satan to confirm his leadership by offering to undertake the hazardous

task of carrying it out. He does so with grand heroic gesture, winning infinite renown in Hell (lines 390 ff.) The whole situation is thus moulded to his private benefit, and his personal enterprise made, under democratic sanction, to figure as a splendid act of public service. The fact implies a human lesson, teaching us, as Milton points out, to scan with suspicion the specious deeds of men—"Which glory excites, or close ambition varnished o'er with zeal."

After the assembly the devils, like the heroes of the *Aeneid,* engage in epic recreation, the lower sort in physical sports, the higher in song and poetry, the noblest of all in philosophical discourse (lines 506 ff.). Still others undertake the geographical exploration of their new abode. As always, their doings are patterns and types of the varied activities of men. They initiate the chief subjects of speculation and anticipate the main trends of all secular philosophy. As angels, their intellectual flights surpass the human; as fallen souls, they have lost the key to truth and "find no end, in wandering mazes lost."

The narrative now turns to Satan and describes his encounter with Sin, his daughter and paramour in Heaven, and with Death their son. Loathsome as the episode is, it yet has its significant place in the economy of the poem, as bringing to our attention the real ugliness of evil which has hitherto been masked in the dazzling brightness of its author. It is Sin, who, following her nature, disobeys the injunction of God by opening the gates of Hell.

The journey of Satan through Chaos (lines 891 ff.), the description of the realm of the uncreated and of the old Anarch who personifies its blind confusion, the final contrast, as the battered voyager swims into the calm and

light which radiate from ordered nature, are among the greatest triumphs of Milton's imagination.

BOOK III. The change of scene to Heaven is introduced by a new invocation (lines 1–55)—a prayer to God under the image of light. The passage embodies the first of the great personal utterances which recur at intervals throughout *Paradise Lost* and constitute a lyric thread interweaving itself with the objective narrative. The pathos of blindness, the consoling love of beauty, the thirst of fame, the consciousness of precious inward vision vouchsafed in compensation for the deprivation of outward light are expressed with consummate eloquence.

The celestial dialogue which follows (lines 56 ff.) is an exposition, dignified but cold, of the theological scheme. With such purely didactic material Milton, as a poet, can do little. His visual imagination is in abeyance, and his verse for the first time loses its compelling power. The intense spirituality, moreover, which pervades Dante's thorniest statements of pure doctrine in the *Paradiso,* is entirely lacking in him. He knows, in fact, only a moral Paradise, and is a stranger to the ecstasies of a mystical Heaven. There is, however, a momentary exaltation as Christ prophesies his triumph over Death, and when Milton turns from the pronouncement of the divine decrees to phrase the angelic song of worship (lines 372 ff.), he rises again to his accustomed heights. Attention should be called to the conscious parallel between Christ's proposed sacrifice for man's salvation (lines 217 ff.) and the earlier offer of Satan to undertake his ruin. The silence of Heaven before the invitation to assume man's sin corresponds to the hesitation of the fallen spirits when the project of assaulting the new world is proposed. The

pronouncement that in Christ "love hath abounded more than glory abounds" points the contrast with Satan's masked motive of ambitious pride.

Milton's more mundane and romantic imagination, revealing itself in a new abundance of poetic similes, returns to him with Satan alighting on the convex of the world and beholding for the first time the beauties of the earthly garden (lines 416 ff.). The spirit of controversial satire intrudes in the anti-catholic description of the Paradise of Fools (lines 440 ff.), and there is an undue burden of astronomical and alchemical learning in the concluding account of the encounter of Satan with the archangel of the sun (lines 654 ff.). On the whole, Book III represents a pause in the onward sweep of Milton's genius, a space devoted to the transaction of business, unpoetic, but necessary to the larger didactic and philosophic purposes of the epic.

BOOK IV. The opening scene, with Satan standing torn by inward passion on the top of Mt. Niphates, brings us again into the realm of drama. The remorseful soliloquy which follows (lines 32 ff.) represents a reaction from the outward confidence which Satan has assumed before his host, a revelation of the Hell within the soul. He now experiences the bitterer aspect of the truth of his own principle that "the mind is its own place." The conclusion is a new resolve to accept evil for his good. The disfiguring of his countenance, which results from his inward struggle and causes the angel to recognize him as one of the fallen spirits, is a step in the progressive change of his appearance, carefully marked by Milton as evidence of the manner in which the soul transforms the

body for better or for worse to its own essence (see *Comus,* lines 453–475).

In his description of the Garden of Eden (lines 210 ff.), Milton luxuriates in detail and brings to bear a wealth of comparison from his classical and romantic reading. The picture of our first parents in their naked majesty and beauty, surrounded by the abundant delights of Paradise, is in accordance with the ornate traditions of Renaissance literature and art. An instinctive emotion of admiration and pity, the momentary assertion of his angelic nature, wells up in Satan, immediately to be checked by the recollection of his cruel purpose (lines 357 ff.). It is thus that he stultifies his better impulses and prepares himself to do what else, though damned, he would abhor.

The first word which we hear Adam speak (lines 411 ff.) is appropriately one of gratitude, the next is to recall the prohibition, the pledge of their obedience and the symbol of their moral natures. Eve, in an exquisite narrative (lines 440 ff.) of her first experiences, reveals the sweet simplicity and frankness of her soul in innocence and the intensity of her love. This is the first of the epic relations which round out that part of the story not covered in the action proper. It also serves to suggest, in the incident of her contemplating her own beauty in the mirror of the pool, Eve's weakness. Satan now speaks again (lines 505 ff.), but his dominant impulse is no longer pity but the more ignoble one of envy. He anticipates the arguments of scepticism regarding the command which he is later to use to Eve and she in turn to communicate to Adam. The warning by Uriel of the

angelic guard is followed by a symphony of night and married love as Adam and Eve retire to their nuptial bower (lines 610 ff.). It is in accord both with tradition and with the special purpose of motivating the subsequent action of the poem that the pair is represented primarily in the rôle of lovers. Milton takes the occasion (lines 741 ff.) to exalt the ideal domestic relationship of man and woman in both its physical and its spiritual aspects, and to denounce the false conception of chivalric love, which his observation has taught him to be too often the mask of corruption. True love exists only in marriage and it is founded not in an unsound exaltation of woman, but in mutual esteem, with rational recognition of the superior dignity and authority of man. The hard saying "he for God only, she for God in him" implies a natural hierarchy of existence on earth, corresponding to that which Satan has attempted to break down in Heaven. But Eve, like the angels, while looking to her lord for interpretation of God's will and her own duty, has also, like them, an independent relation to, and revelation of, the divine. To Milton all this was beautiful and right.

The angels now mount guard with military precision (lines 776 ff.) and encounter Satan, "his lustre visibly impaired." His uneasy shuffling with truth is contrasted with the clear and righteous certainty of the obedient ministers of Heaven. The portent of the scales of Justice, adapted from the *Iliad,* affords the usual striking conclusion of a book.

BOOK V. Satan's first approach to Eve is made through her unconscious self in sleep. She wakes still troubled with her dream of sin and receives from Adam a lesson in the accepted psychology of Milton's time (lines 95 ff.),

with the comfort of his wise pronouncement that involuntary motions of evil in the mind, when unapproved, leave no spot of blame behind. The morning prayer which follows (lines 136 ff.), fervid and spontaneous, needing no set form, no temple, no musical accompaniment, is a magnificent descant on the great theme "The Heavens declare the glory of God." This, far more than his metrical paraphrases, is Milton's true poetic version of the Psalms, and it shows how deeply he had entered into the majesty of Hebraic religious feeling. As if in answer to their invocation God sends Raphael, the companionable angel, to warn and instruct them in their need. His coming is made the occasion for a discussion of the angelic nature and its relation to the human (lines 403 ff.). The question whether Raphael can partake of human food leads to the explanation that all being is one uniform scale, the higher members differing from the lower only in degree. Thus the angels have, like man, a material body and all functions analogous to his, though more refined. Milton is expressing in this curious passage, so absurd to the modern reader, two profound anti-medieval convictions which constitute the basis of his thought: the metaphysical one that matter is real and that there is no sharp distinction between spirit and matter, the one passing insensibly into the other; and the ethical inference that the natural functions of the body are not something shameful and unworthy. The angel passes on to a new affirmation of the freedom of the will (lines 519 ff.), and then to his long narrative of the revolt and fall of Lucifer (lines 563 ff.). This discourse, which corresponds in the epic structure to the relation of Odysseus to the king of the Phoeacians and of Aeneas to Dido, besides complet-

ing the story, serves to put Adam in possession of all the information necessary for victory in his coming trial. Knowledge, to Milton, is the best weapon against sin. The philosophic assumption which underlies the narrative and indeed Milton's whole conception of his poem, is given in lines 563–77. Spiritual facts can only so be represented to human sense, but there is also perhaps a real analogy between earth and Heaven, the former being, according to the Platonic doctrine of ideas, an imperfect replica of the latter; and this analogy justifies the phrasing of divine events in material terms. The incident of Abdiel (lines 800 ff.), concluded in the next book, reveals Milton's lofty conception of the moral courage which enables the individual to stand alone in his convictions against the world.

BOOK VI. The second day's battle contains the much maligned episode of the invention and first use of artillery, which should be considered not as an isolated piece of sensationalism but as a necessary completion of the idea of the book. The technical evolutions which attend the firing of the cannon are drawn from military textbooks which Milton had attentively studied and serve to give a representative and contemporary aspect to the whole.[7] Finally (lines 628 ff.), Milton converts the conflict into a primitive battle of the Titans, as the armies desert their discipline and, abandoning civilized arms, hurl confusedly at each other whatever crude missiles come to hand. He intends to suggest that the last end of war is like its beginning—bestial, anarchic, inconclusive. The utmost refinements of scientific slaughter are but a mask of chaos and can only end in a disruption of the orderly civilization

[7] Hanford, *Milton and the Art of War.*

of which they are the product. The significance of the account is definitely indicated at the close of the book (lines 680 ff.), when the Almighty, beholding the confusion, declares that

> War, wearied, hath performed what war can do,
> And to disordered rage let loose the reins,
> With mountains as with weapons, armed; which makes
> Wild work in Heaven, and dangerous to the main—

and sends forth the Son in majesty to put an end at once to evil and to strife. In view of the poet's controlling purpose our sense of the artistic improprieties of his narrative and of the inferiority in human interest of a struggle in which, however mighty the clash of fearful opposites, nobody can be killed and the outcome is predetermined, tends to disappear. Johnson's verdict that the "confusion of spirit and matter which pervades the whole narrative of the war in Heaven fills it with incongruity" is true, but this result is in accord with Milton's fundamental postulates regarding the parallel of things in Heaven and things on earth, and, besides, there was nothing else to do.

BOOK VII. A new invocation (lines 1–39), with personal allusions to the poet's isolation in the alien and hostile society of the Restoration, introduces an account of the creation, a theme which Milton pursues with eagerness after the general precedent of such independent Biblical poems as Du Bartas' *La Semaine* and Tasso's *Il Mondo Creato*. Adam frames a modest request for the story (lines 70 ff.), and the Angel, in granting it, suggests the true object of such knowledge, "to glorify the Maker and infer thee also happier," forewarning him

against vain exploration of the secret things of God. It was in such a spirit that Milton himself taught in his school the natural science of his day. The ornate and majestic paraphrase of Genesis which follows, is indeed a pæan of created nature praising its great author. The phrases of the Scriptural original are preserved intact but a wealth of detail is added. The poet enumerates the tribes of fishes, birds, and animals with an appropriate sense of their marvelous variety. The creation of man himself is more briefly handled. When the six days labor is completed the angels sing a psalm of gratitude. Nor are they silent through the long Sabbath day of rest. The purport of their song (lines 602 ff.) suggests the significance of this book, coming, as it does, after the narrative of celestial war, in Milton's larger thought. The active formation of good follows the destruction of evil in the natural order of the universe. God is even greater in his return than from the giant angels. "To create is greater than created to destroy." This idea of the superiority of the works of peace is one of Milton's noblest convictions. It lies at the heart not only of this portion of *Paradise Lost,* but of the sonnets to Cromwell and Fairfax, and it determined in no small degree the character of his own zealous activity in the Commonwealth.

BOOK VIII. Instructed regarding the origin of evil, warned by an example of the consequences of disobedience, and taught to contemplate the wonders of created nature, Adam now receives further lessons on no less vital points. His questions concerning the construction of the universe (lines 15 ff.), unlike his inquiries hitherto, trespass dangerously near the boundary which divides legitimate curiosity from the spirit of prying into matters which are no

concern of man. The angel perhaps detects in Adam's suggestion of a disproportion in God's creation a tendency to pick flaws in, rather than to admire, the scheme of things. He throws out a hint of the Copernican system in partial solution of these human doubts (lines 122 ff.), but quickly turns to draw the lesson: "Solicit not thy thoughts with matters hid. . . . Be lowly wise. Think only what concerns thee and thy being."

Adam is thus warned against the folly and even the danger of random speculation and taught to focus his attention on such studies as have a direct bearing on the practical art of righteous living. We have here an abiding principle of Milton's as well as an *ad hoc* suggestion which looks forward to the motives of the fall. Had not Eve at the beginning of this discussion retired to tend her flowers she might have received a wholesome antidote against the curious and vain desire to become as God, knowing both good and evil, which afterward proved her ruin.

Adam's narrative (lines 249 ff.), corresponding to Eve's in Book IV, is exquisite in itself and full of profound significance. The quick instinctive motion of his upward spring is the symbol of his aspiration heavenward. His first moment of consciousness is one of physical self-survey. Then he turns to inquire his origin, arriving by natural reason at the idea of a divine author with attributes of goodness and of power. Having gone thus far on his search unaided he is vouchsafed a revelation, and awaking from his trance he receives the prohibition (lines 311 ff.)—a kind of categorical imperative which confirms him as a religious and a moral being.

His next instinct (lines 357 ff.) is for some human com-

panionship. By whimsically pretending to argue him out of it, the Deity brings home the lesson that he is a man and not a brute. He then receives God's last best gift, accepted with an outburst of passionate gratitude and a superb flash of insight into the true relations of man and woman (lines 491–499). The recalling of this episode leads Adam to confess his weakness, the one flaw in his bright armor of strength and reason. He suggests that his creation after all is not quite perfect, since it has left him undefended against the charm of beauty's powerful glance. The angel, quick to scent a dangerous philosophy, asserts the supremacy of the will, and warns Adam that he must at all costs maintain self-mastery in passion (lines 561 ff.). Then, falling again into his more genial mood, he tells (lines 618 ff.) how angels love—a strange and wonderful exposition similar in philosophic purport to the account of the relations of human and angelic activities in matters of digestion in Book V.

BOOK IX. The moment of a great change in the tone of the narrative is marked by a meditative introduction (lines 1–47) in which the poet surveys his theme, and acclaims it, in its spiritual character, not less but more heroic than those of the great epics of antiquity which dealt with wars and outward struggle. Milton has evidently seriously considered the question whether his subject, with its novelty of an unhappy outcome, can properly be brought into conformity with the established epic type. He has also weighed the other assumptions against him—his four and forty degrees of northern latitude—the common notion that genius no longer flourishes in a senile world—his own advancing age. Confident, however, of

the wisdom of his choice and referring all to the aid of his celestial patroness, he pushes bravely on.

The imaginative sweep which comes and goes with Satan prevails again in the description of his sevenfold encircling of the world (lines 62 ff.). There is more bitterness and more despair in the soliloquy which precedes his imbruting himself within the serpent and it is his own word which expounds the symbolism of the act.

The coming of morning brings a new dialogue between Adam and Eve (lines 192 ff.). The latter, with an impulse housewifely but unfortunate, proposes a brief separation that they may work at their gardening without the interruptions of affectionate discourse. Adam, in his superior wisdom, deprecates such hyper-conscientiousness and warns her of the danger she runs in exposing herself unprotected to the assault of the tempter. Such an apparent slighting of her firmness hurts Eve's feelings and brings the first small cloud upon the domestic horizon. It is not quite clear whether the poet intended Adam's attitude throughout this dialogue to be regarded as irreproachable and Eve's alone the cause of trouble. One fears he did; yet, judged by Milton's general philosophy, Eve has much the best of the argument. She criticizes, as he himself would have done, the naïve idea that the mere temptation leaves a stain of dishonor on the soul, and she employs the very language of the *Areopagitica* in her denunciation of a fugitive and cloistered virtue unexercised and unbreathed (lines 322–341). The trouble is that her confidence is unjustified by the event and the whole discussion may perhaps be taken as a supplement rather than a contradiction to the doctrines of Milton's prose

pamphlet, a warning that the philosophy of freedom does not apply to the immature and weak. Adam himself, in his refusal to coerce her will (lines 341 ff.), acts in the spirit of Milton's statement in *Areopagitica* that children and childish men may be exhorted to abstain from the possibility of evil influence but hindered forcibly they cannot be.

The parting of Adam and his spouse is full of tender loveliness, and classical mythology is ransacked for images wherewith to express Eve's beauty. Satan, watching her, is like an Iago plotting the ruin of Desdemona or even more exactly like another Lovelace preparing for what is to all intents and purposes a seduction. His crafty approach through the insidious means of flattery is subtly conceived (lines 494 ff.). Eve is deluded in her weakness, but once confronted by the tree of prohibition she recognizes clearly the guilt involved. This is Milton's modification or interpretation of the Biblical statement "the woman was deceived." He could not have her sin unconsciously. To overcome her hesitation Satan musters all his eloquence, bursting forth without exordium, in praise of the sciential sap, like some ancient orator—Cicero, for example, in his first oration against Catiline. He employs all the arguments which scepticism can suggest against an arbitrary and irrational command, and, with the coöperating aid of mere physical appetite at the noontide hour, prevails. Eve unconsciously falls into his own train of reasoning. Her disobedience is followed by an unnatural exhilaration as of wine. She exhibits new and unworthy motives of selfishness and jealousy in thinking what course she shall pursue with Adam, and she appears before him with a lying word upon her lips.

The fall of Adam himself (lines 896 ff.) is motivated by passion. At least it is that which prompts his immediate resolve. Though his understanding enables him to penetrate the deceit, as Eve with her feebler mentality did not, and anticipate the certain consequence, he soon falls under the influence of a reasoning as false as hers, and experiences afterward the same transient delight in sin.

The representation is colored by the Greek idea of "hybris"—the intoxication of the mind which afflicts the sinner and leads him to fancy himself the equal of the gods. A new element, moreover, has entered his relations with his mate—the element of lust in contrast with the former innocence and purity of their married love (lines 1034 ff.). Disillusionment promptly follows, and bitter recrimination. The fruits of the tree are, indeed, new knowledge, but a knowledge which is really sophistication leading to self-contempt and shame.

In Milton's treatment of this, the central incident of his poem, there are, besides its dramatic vividness and keen psychology, many essential points of moral and theological doctrine. He explains in the *De Doctrina Christiana* that the fall of our first parents, properly considered, was a transgression of the whole law, all sins being included in the act—unbelief, ingratitude, disobedience, gluttony; in the man, excessive uxoriousness; in the woman, a want of proper regard for her husband, parricide, theft, invasion of the rights of others, sacrilege, deceit, fraud in the means employed to attain the object, pride, and arrogance. The eating of the apple, therefore, becomes a type or even a symbol of sin rather than a particular offense. In making Eve fall through vanity and curiosity for new experience, Adam through blind passion, Milton points to what he

believes the characteristic weaknesses respectively of man and woman. Adam's act was to Milton in no sense noble or heroic. It was, indeed, less pardonable than Eve's in proportion to his superior intelligence and moral strength. There is no gainsaying the fact, however, that the poet bears a grudge against woman as the perverse occasion of man's entanglement. The book, as a whole, displays new ranges of Milton's genius—a unique power of analysis of the ways of evil in the soul. Its greatness is not inferior to that of the more celebrated picture of Satan in Books I and II.

BOOK X. The account of the judgment (lines 104 ff.) proceeds in strict accord with the Scriptural narrative in Genesis iii, no detail being omitted. The allegory of Sin and Death is completed as the hideous pair ascend to earth and prepare to set their seal of mastery upon created nature (lines 229 ff.). Satan returns to proclaim the triumph of his epic adventure (lines 410 ff.)—a triumph which is turned to bitterness by the metamorphosis of the demons into serpents and of their shout of applause into a hiss, the sign of scorn. This degradation of their forms is the consequence and outward symbol of the degradation of their souls. A similar though less complete alteration, carried out by angels in obedience to divine command, takes place in the realm of physical nature, now no longer pure (lines 641 ff.). The passage illustrates the habit of mingling science and theology which Milton inherited from medieval thought.

A more human note is struck in the Job-like lament of Adam (lines 720 ff.), reminiscent also of the baffled speculations of Hamlet on life and death. A fine contrast not altogether favorable to the man is drawn between the

remorse of Adam and Eve. She is more concerned with his state than with her own. He exhibits the brutality of disillusionment and resorts to Euripides for bitter reflections on the curse of the eternal feminine, but is ultimately won by the helpless pathos of her appeal. She exhibits a fertile but unsound ingenuity in her suggestion of a way by which to avoid the doom pronounced upon their offspring with an implication of stoic fortitude which wins Adam's admiration (lines 966 ff.). His own courage returns in the attempt to comfort her, and the book ends, in contrast to Book IX, with a cessation of mutual blame and an access of sincere repentance.

BOOK XI. Further celestial dialogue (lines 1–125) prepares for the decree of banishment, to be pronounced, with an accompanying remission of the penalty of immediate death, by Michael, the minister of God's justice.

Adam has a presentiment of some further change by the mute signs of nature (lines 193 ff.). Eve, with pathetic irony, is made to express her willingness to submit to any fate in this beloved home of Paradise. At the news that they must leave forthwith, Adam is struck dumb, and it is Eve who utters the first spontaneous lament (lines 268 ff.). Her strong instinctive love of the flowers that she has tended, of the nuptial bower that she has adorned, is rudely violated. The angel gently reminds her that her going is not lonely. Then Adam expresses his profounder fear of a break in his communion with the Divine (lines 293 ff.). To reassure him of the continued presence of God to him and to his offspring and to discipline his soul in patience, Michael leads him to a lofty hill and begins a visionary revelation of the future of the race. This

prophecy (lines 432 ff.), which corresponds to the Sibyl's predictions in the sixth book of the *Aeneid* of the course of Roman history, serves to round out the larger meaning of Milton's epic by displaying the operation of hereditary sin consequent upon Adam's act, and at the same time illustrates the manner in which God's love contends with the waywardness of man, until, in the process of time, his crowning purpose, of humanity's salvation through the sacrifice of Christ, is fulfilled. The passage, which extends through the remainder of Book XI and the greater part of Book XII, is a marvelous condensation of Hebrew story, comprising grave moral lessons. The first part of the exposition appropriately ends with the Flood and the apparition of the rainbow as the first prefiguring symbol of God's restoring and redeeming grace.

BOOK XII. From this point, the beginning of revelation of a second world, with its higher and more mysterious matter, the angel no longer presents the scenes to Adam's eyes but narrates them to his intelligence. As the events in the history of the chosen people shape themselves Adam sees more and more clearly the operation of a providential plan. Moses and Joshua are indicated to him as types of Christ (lines 238–248; 311–313). The corruption and dissension which follow the return from captivity with the resultant passing of David's scepter to a stranger are said to be permitted that "the Anointed King Messiah might be born Barred of his Right" (lines 359–360). At the angel's mention of the virgin birth of Christ the meaning of the mysterious words of the Deity is revealed and Adam bursts forth in joy (lines 371 ff.).

The fuller story of Christ's sacrifice (lines 386 ff.), his resurrection, his triumph over Satan, his restoration of

mankind to bliss leaves the listener in doubt whether he should repent him of his sin,[8] or rejoice

Much more that much more good from thence shall spring

He acknowledges the lesson that man, too, has his part in the Redemption and expresses his resolve to walk henceforth the patient moral way of obedience and slow self-conquest. In thrilling words (lines 574 ff.) the angel sets the seal of approval on Adam's new-found wisdom, bidding him add deeds to his knowledge answerable—faith, virtue, patience, temperance, and love, the soul of all the rest. So shall he build a Paradise within, far happier than the one that he has lost. This is the grand climax of the poem, the spiritual goal of Milton's art. In a brief and beautiful conclusion (lines 606 ff.) we are brought back again to the specific subject of the loss of Eden. Eve awakes from a gentle dream in which she has received the essential revelation of the great deliverance through her seed. Softened and exalted she faces a future now no longer terrible. The closing lines describe in terms of mingled hope and sadness the departure of the pair from Eden.

COSMOLOGY AND DOCTRINAL CONTENT

The physical action of *Paradise Lost,* taking place as it does in Heaven, Earth, and Hell, obliges Milton to visu-

[8] A rather needless controversy was started by Erskine's suggestion (*The Theme of Death in "Paradise Lost"*) that Milton changed his theological attitude toward the fall and its results before he reached the conclusion of his poem. That his conception of it as a mingled tragedy and blessing is in perfect accord with Christian tradition was shown by Moore, *The Conclusion of "Paradise Lost."* See also Stoll, *Was Paradise Well Lost?*

alize the structure of the universe and to commit himself for imaginative purposes to one of the two astronomical systems which in his day offered themselves as rival explanations of the phenomena—namely, the Ptolemaic and the Copernican. He inevitably adopted the former, with the Earth fixed at the center and the heavenly bodies revolving about it, as being firmly established in poetic and theological tradition and as better adapted to imaginative representation. With the mathematical detail of this system he was thoroughly familiar, and we know that he taught the elements of astronomical calculation on the Ptolemaic basis in his school, using a revised edition of the medieval textbook by Sacrobosco.[9] But he was familiar also with the principles of the Copernican astronomy, having read the dialogue of Galileo,[10] and was evidently well aware of its claims. His personal attitude was apparently that of suspended judgment. Even in *Paradise Lost* (Book VIII, lines 122 ff.) he makes the angel offer Adam his choice of theories, with the implication that no mortal can be perfectly sure which one is right.

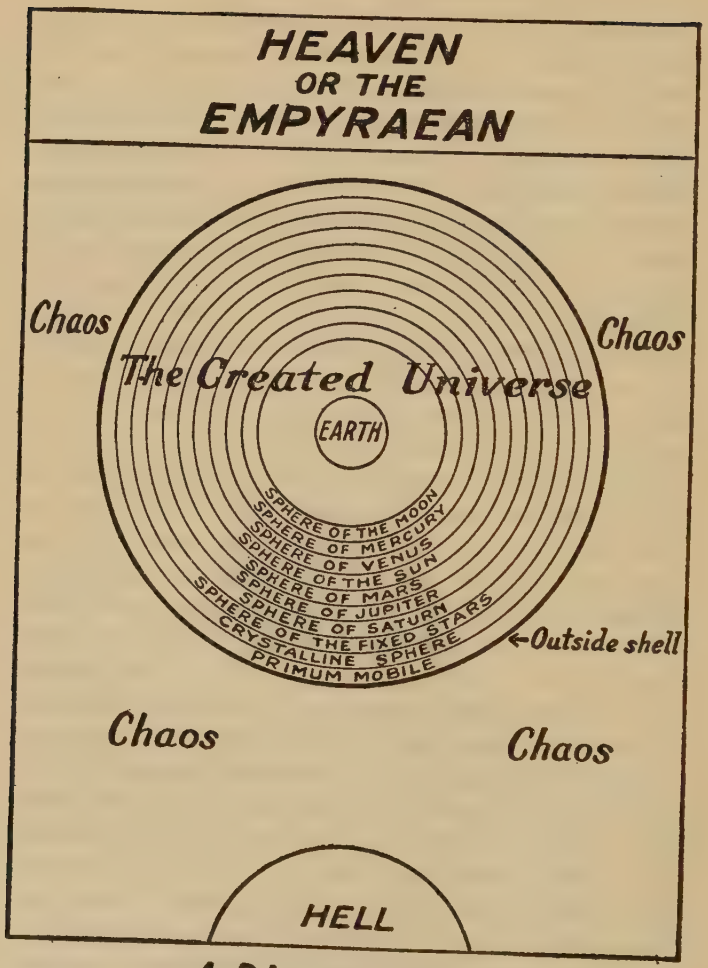
For the material data which he found necessary to his representation he resorted to all manner of sources and to his own invention, employing Scriptural suggestions wherever possible and taking pains to add nothing which would be directly contradictory to Holy Writ. It is not to be thought that he offered such details as the causeway from Hell to Earth, the chain by which the visible universe depended from Heaven, or the spheres themselves which encircled the Earth and carried the planets and the

[9] Gilbert, *Milton's Textbook of Astronomy.*
[10] Gilbert, *Milton and Galileo.*

fixed stars, as obligatory to the understanding. They were simply imaginative representations which might or might not correspond to actuality. Sometimes he is deliberately vague, as when he says that Heaven is "undetermined square or round." Often his concrete detail or measurement is useful only for the moment and defies adoption into the general scheme, as where he says that the distance from Hell to Heaven was three times the distance from the center of the Earth to the pole of the uttermost encircling sphere (*P. L.* Book I, lines 73, 74).

For these reasons it is misleading to make a detailed plan of Milton's universe, though many have been offered. The diagram given on p. 174 represents only his fundamental conceptions, which are as follows:

Infinite space is thought of as originally divided into two parts,—Heaven above, also called the Empyraean; and Chaos or uncreated matter beneath. Within this Chaos God "puts forth his virtue" and builds, first Hell at the bottom, as a receptacle for the falling angels, and then the visible universe, usually referred to as "the World," as a home for man. The latter consists of the fixed Earth as a center, with a shell of concentric spheres moving about it at varying rates of speed. Beyond this shell, of course, is Chaos. The spheres themselves are ten in number. The first seven, beginning with the one nearest the Earth, carry the planets (including the Sun and the Moon) in the following order: the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, and are named from them. The eighth, called the Firmament or Coelum Stellatum, carries all the fixed stars. The ninth, the Crystalline, contains no bodies. Milton thinks of it as composed of water. The tenth is the Primum Mobile, or, in Milton's



A Diagram of
Milton's Universe

expression, "the first moved." Its function is to impart motion to the rest. Milton appears to have thought of the whole apparatus as encased in a hard, opaque, protective shell which was immovable.[11]

Milton's system, as thus outlined, is, in general, parallel to that of Dante, but there are some notable points of divergence. In the first place, Dante locates Hell in the center of the Earth itself. Milton, in adopting the other alternative provided by theological tradition, remarks (argument to Book I) that Hell is "described here not in the center (for Heaven and Earth may be supposed as not yet made, certainly not yet accursed), but in a place of utter darkness, fitliest called Chaos." He defends this location also on the same grounds, and with reference to the opinion of Chrysostom and Luther, in the *De Doctrina Christiana,* Book I, chapter 33. In *Paradise Lost* (Book XII, line 224), however, he refers casually to a bituminous pit in Babylonia as "the mouth of Hell." Dante, secondly, makes only nine spheres, omitting the Crystalline, or identifying it with the Primum Mobile. These are, moreover, with him actual heavens in which the spirits of the blessed appear. His tenth Heaven or Heaven of Heavens is the infinite space beyond. In technical astronomical discussions the spheres ranged in number from nine to eleven. Milton, of course, omits all reference to Purgatory, with Dante a mountain on the Earth opposite to Jerusalem, and he places Paradise, which Dante locates on the top of the Purgatorial mountain, on the Tigris River in Mesopotamia. At the time of the Flood it was washed away and became a desert island in the Red Sea.

An immense amount of cosmological and other lore is

[11] See Gilbert, *The Outside Shell of Milton's World.*

given, first and last, in *Paradise Lost.* The poem is, indeed, in one aspect, a kind of cyclopedia of the science of Milton's time. The remarkable thing about Milton's comprehensive grasp of human knowledge is the way in which he unifies the whole and subjects it to the service of his philosophy of life. His closest precedent in this respect is Dante, and the general attitude which makes science a part of theology in the broadest sense is medieval.

The following references (the list might easily be extended) will serve as a guide to Milton's conceptions with regard to the physical construction of the universe:

Hell, II, 570–628.

Chaos, II, 890–967.

The created universe, II, 1034–1053; III, 418–735; V, 171–208; VII, 205–547.

Heaven, III, 56–79; V, 563–587; VI, passim.

The causeway from Hell to Earth, X, 272–324.

Eden and Paradise, IV, 208–287.

Physical changes after the Fall, X, 651–714.

The rival astronomical theories, VIII, 12–168.

The scale of nature and the forms of life, V, 469–490; VII, 387–547.[12]

If *Paradise Lost* is a repository of scientific and pseudo-scientific lore, it is still more a repository of theological, metaphysical, moral, and political doctrine. Milton has himself suggested a classification of this body of ideas and principles, in the headings under which he accumulated in his private notebooks the materials of his thought.[13]

[12] See the works of Warren and Orchard, also the statement in Verity's edition of *Paradise Lost,* Appendix, for a detailed account of Milton's universe.

[13] See Horwood, *Commonplace Book.*

He had an Index Theologicus,[14] an Index Ethicus, an Index Oeconomicus (i. e., domestic), and an Index Politicus. The same fundamental scheme of thought is in his mind when he says in *Areopagitica* that liberty is religious, domestic, and civil. These divisions run into each other, and a completely logical account of the Miltonic system demands some such comprehensive and detailed analysis as is attempted by Denis Saurat in his *Milton: Man and Thinker*. For practical purposes, however, Milton's own simpler scheme will serve. Indeed, since he himself endeavored to comprehend the whole body of his thinking within the terms of Christianity, his work on the Christian Doctrine becomes the best plain guide to the intellectual fabric of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. It is theological, in that it deals with the nature of God and his relations to man; it is ethical, economic, and political, in that it sets forth man's duties in the private, domestic, and civic spheres, at least in so far as these duties can be formulated from Holy Writ.

To present here even the main features of Milton's system is manifestly impossible. It is also unnecessary, as they are stated with perfect lucidity in the poem itself. In many instances the doctrinal expositions in verse follow passages in the *De Doctrina* point by point.[15] The latter, however, are unmixed with imagery or literary fiction and they elaborate arguments, where *Paradise Lost* merely affirms conclusions. A comparison of the two works is the best test of what in the poem he regarded as matter of faith and what as data of the imagination.

[14] This portion of Milton's notes is lost.
[15] See the footnotes in the Bohn edition.

Much light is thrown on the degree of literalness with which the poet took the concrete details incorporated by him from his Biblical original by the discussion of the Scriptural representation of God in the *Christian Doctrine,* Book I, Chapter 2. He there says that actual knowledge of God passes the comprehension of man, that he is exhibited in Scripture not as he really is but in such a way as to suit our understandings. It is best, instead of forming subtle imaginations, to accept his own account of himself as if it were the literal truth. "If 'it repented Jehovah that he had made man,' let us believe that it did repent him, only taking care to remember that what is called repentance when applied to God does not arise from inadvertence." If he ascribes to himself a human image, why should we be afraid to do the same, understanding thereby "not that God is in fashion like unto men in all his parts and members, but that so far as we are concerned to know, he is of that form which he attributes to himself in sacred writings."

In its broad features Milton's theology is the historic Catholic system as modified by Reformation thinkers, including the fundamental doctrines of the special creation of Man, his fall from grace, his salvation through the atoning sacrifice of Christ. The part played by Satan in the temptation, the facts of Christ's incarnation and resurrection, the last judgment with the final separation of the damned from the saved—these things are the cornerstones of Milton's religion as they had been of St. Augustine's and of John Calvin's. He also accepts from traditional theology the idea of the angels as intermediaries between God and man and as appointed guardians of man's welfare. On the other hand, he rejects, with all the

reformed theologians, the special Roman Catholic doctrines of Purgatory, the intercession of the saints, the papal authority, besides many practices such as confession. He departs from the Anglican Church in abandoning the idea of an ecclesiastical hierarchy and in admitting no prescriptive form of worship.

Less obvious but of equally far-reaching importance are his disagreements with orthodox Calvinism, the accepted theology of the Presbyterian Church. The first point is in regard to the doctrine of predestination and free will. Reformation theology generally had always tended to minimize man's part in salvation and to ascribe everything to the grace of God, who had determined from all eternity the rôle of the damned and the elect. Milton announces with equal vehemence the moral responsibility of the individual. In thus advocating the absolute freedom of the human will, Milton sides with humanists like Erasmus against the followers of Martin Luther. He preserves, formally, the traditional statements about grace, election, predestination, but in such a way as to rob them of their sting. Thus predestination is defined as the decree "whereby God in pity to mankind, through foreseeing that they would fall of their own accord, predestined to eternal salvation those who should believe and continue in the faith." In *Paradise Lost* Adam's freedom is everywhere insisted on. This principle is, indeed, central in the meaning of the poem. It is the heart of Milton's justification of the ways of God to man, for without freedom he could not conceive of sin. In the *Areopagitica* he complains that those who deny this make him a mere mechanical Adam like the Adam of the puppet shows, and elsewhere in the prose he says that to rob

man of his power of choice is to impute injustice to God. (Cf. also *Samson Agonistes,* lines 293 ff., "Just are the ways of God, and justifiable to men.") In this point Milton joins with the Arminians and even such Anglicans as Laud against what may be described as the ruling tenet of the Reformation. It is a natural consequence of this mode of thought that the sacrifice of Christ meant less to him. No atonement could possibly take the place of man's individual choice of good. Thus he was naturally led to treat in *Paradise Regained* of Christ's victory over Satan in the temptation rather than of his crucifixion. His acts are, in Milton's deepest feeling, not vicarious but simply patterns for humanity.

Closely related to this departure from orthodoxy is his view of Christ himself as a being divine but distinctly lower than God, and of the Holy Ghost as still inferior in importance. Without entering into intricate theological distinctions we may say that Milton is not an orthodox Trinitarian, but an Arian. To be so was to be a heretic both from the Catholic and from the Reformation standpoint; it was not, however, to be alone, for great theologians in this era, e. g., Servetus, Socinus, and Ochino, had advocated similar views. In *Paradise Lost* Milton rather conceals his anti-Trinitarian heresies, but they are discernible enough both in that poem and in *Paradise Regained,* when read in the light of the elaborate discussions in the *Christian Doctrine.*

One other point remains. It is an essential one in Milton's whole metaphysics. He denied the almost universally accepted doctrine that God created the world out of nothing. The matter which he reduced to order was as eternal as spirit. It was indeed a part of the substance of God

himself. This statement receives explicit expression both in *Paradise Lost* and in the *Christian Doctrine*. The deep is boundless because God is boundless. It is not, however, "vacuous." If it is "uncreated" it is because God retires from it and puts not forth his virtue, which is free to act or not (*P. L.* Book VII, lines 168 ff.). Thus Milton obliterates the sharp distinction between matter and spirit and at the same time affirms the reality of both. He insists on the corporeality of the angels, and suggests (Platonically) that heaven itself offers a point by point analogy with earth. As to man he is not a spirit housed in the mere senseless stock of a body and separable from it, but "a living soul," that is to say, "a body, or substance, individual, animated, sensitive, and rational." An inevitable deduction from the definition is that at death the whole man dies. There is no separate continued existence of the spirit, but all sleeps together till all is revived at the Resurrection. This, again, was a heresy which others shared. There was, in fact, a group of advocates of such an idea, called in Milton's time "mortalists" or "soul-sleepers." [16] With him, however, it was, as I have suggested, no isolated oddity of thought, but a conviction which permeated his entire philosophy. In the moral sphere it teaches him to reject asceticism, and to allow indulgence of the flesh, insisting only that such indulgence should be tempered by reason and under control of the will.

This brings us more specifically to the field of Milton's ethics. His general principles are grounded in the study

[16] Saurat holds that Milton was indebted to the first edition of a treatise *Of Man's Mortality*, 1643, and was himself a contributor to the revision of 1655. *Milton, Man and Thinker*, pp. 310 ff.

of ancient ethics, particularly Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoic writers. From them he derived the idea of the conflict of reason and passion in the soul of man and a conviction as to the importance of knowledge as an instrument of virtue. The essential fall of man occurs when passion predominates over reason. Thus the angel instructs Adam in all that it is essential for him to know in order to meet temptation successfully. He fails when he allows his intelligence to be blinded and follows the dictates of the powerful instinct which draws him toward Eve. Thus, also, Christ foils Satan in *Paradise Regained* by clearly surveying all the enticements which are held out to him, analyzing them Socratically, and detecting their fallaciousness. His discourses are intended as a model for men confronted with a similar series of choices.

If, however, Milton's general conception of man's moral nature is founded on the ethical wisdom of the ancients, it is in Scripture that he finds at once the sanction and the content of human virtue. God is the author of the moral law. Duty is the sole daughter of his voice. First given to Adam in the form of an arbitrary command, then to Moses as a set of specific obligations, his law is finally embodied as a spirit in the person of Christ and in that form supplements or supersedes all earlier revelations. It is no longer arbitrary but completely conformable to reason. "God and reason bid the same." It is written not alone in the Book but in the hearts of all believers, and to them is left the problem of its application. This is what Milton means by the gospel liberty (*De Doctrina Christiana* Book I, chapter 28), and it is on this principle

of the authority of the individual conscience that he challenges the validity of man-made laws which do not have its sanction.

In the second book of the *Christian Doctrine* Milton gives a full discussion of the specific duties of man toward God, toward himself, and toward his neighbor, basing his formulation chiefly on the New Testament. Man's duties to himself are temperance, chastity, frugality, industry, fortitude, patience; among those to his neighbor are charity, meekness, veracity, faithfulness, gravity, justice, liberality, gratitude. Chapter XV opens the subject of reciprocal duties, as between parent and child, husband and wife. This includes a discussion of divorce, which falls in Milton's Commonplace Book under the head of Index Oeconomicus. There follows a brief chapter on public duties, political and ecclesiastical.

Much of this material reappears, sometimes in the form of doctrinal statement, oftener by implication, in *Paradise Lost*. Especial emphasis is given to the subject of the proper relations of husband and wife, since these are the ones primarily involved in the story of Adam and Eve. To Milton the peace and virtue of the home were best assured if the wife remained in a proper state of subjection to her husband. Such subordination to a natural superior was, indeed, the proper law of the whole universe. Thus woman should look up to man, man to angel, inferior angel to superior angel, and all to God. It was the attempted disruption of this order which led alike to the fall of Satan and the fall of man. Milton's criticism of the system of chivalric or courtly love is that it reverses the normal situation by placing woman above man.

Hence Satan assumes the rôle of Petrarchan sonneteer when he makes his initial attack on Eve.

The outstanding features of Milton's political thought are embodied chiefly in his prose pamphlets and have, in their practical application to the affairs of his time, already been discussed. In *Paradise Lost* Milton has been said to have been at odds with his own experience and conviction, in that he condemns rebellion and exalts "the tyranny of Heaven." He is not really so, however. The rebellion of Satan against the Almighty is not in his mind the equivalent of justifiable uprisings against the usurping kings of Earth. The parallel, indeed, is rather with the party of King Charles than with the Puritans, as Milton himself suggests when he says in *Areopagitica* that the Court of Star Chamber "is now fallen from the stars with Lucifer." For to him the usurper was the rebel against God. The form of government aimed at by Cromwell and his followers was a true theocracy of the sort that Milton found illustrated in Hebrew history. His political teachings in this regard are embodied in the Scriptural résumé put into the mouth of Michael. The heavenly monarchy naturally finds no counterpart in any earthly state. The government of Hell, on the other hand, is representative of the Machiavellian ideal of statecraft—skillful, superficially patriotic, and from the worldly point of view efficient, but vitiated by being divorced from good. Nor is it redeemed by its democracy, a mere pretense adopted by Satan as a means to selfish ends. True democracy is represented rather by the humble ant, whose state is described in Book VII, line 485, as the "pattern of just equality, perhaps, hereafter." This, by the way, is the only recognition I know of in Milton's works of the pos-

sibility of such a condition among men. The practical substitute for it is an autocratic but wise and benevolent rule by the godly few.

On the question of the sources and affiliations of Milton's thought much has been written. The subject still awaits, however, definitive treatment at the hands of a competent historian of philosophy. Milton's mind had ranged through the whole realm of speculation. Ancient philosophy, Biblical and Patristic thought, Reformation theology in all its varieties, the philosophic movements and religious heterodoxies of his own day—all were familiar to him and from them he culled the elements of his own eclectic system. One distrusts the attribution of his fundamental ideas to the influence of any single source. Here are some of the men or schools whose intellectual relationship with Milton has been most strongly advocated: Bernardino Ochino,[17] Jakob Boehme,[18] the Cabalists,[19] Henry More and the Cambridge Platonists,[20] Giordano Bruno,[21] Michael Servetus,[22] the Quakers.[23] Not one of these is mentioned in the *De Doctrina Christiana,* which, nevertheless, lists dozens of standard theologians. It is true, however, that Milton would be likely to suppress the names of the less reputable authorities. He says in the introduction that he had not even read any of the works of heretics, so-called, "when the mistakes of those who are

[17] Wood, *Milton's Antitrinitarian Conception.*
[18] Bailey, *Milton and Jakob Boehme.*
[19] Saurat, *Milton,* pp. 281–310.
[20] Marjorie Nicolson in a forthcoming study.
[21] Liljegren, *Milton et Giordano Bruno,* denies this influence.
[22] Martin Larson, *Milton and Servetus,* forthcoming in *Publications of the Modern Language Association.*
[23] Samson, *Studies in Milton,* pp. 167 ff.

reckoned orthodox first taught me to agree with their opponents whenever these opponents agreed with Scripture."

With all his rationalism, however, Milton never really crosses the line which divides Christian and idealistic thought generally from naturalism in any of its ancient or modern manifestations. He could, for example, have no part in the materialistic conclusions of a Lucretius, however much one side of his intellect may have been allured by it. Accordingly, he banishes to chaos the operation of mere material force. In that realm of being, which God neglects, we have the Epicurean atoms clashing blindly against each other according to the laws of chance but powerless to evolve an ordered world without the exercise of the divine will. With regard to the radical and naturalistic thought of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Milton is apparently partly conscious of its menace to the idealist tradition both in the field of abstract speculation and of practical conduct. His opposition to the theological determinism of the Calvinists has behind it an opposition to the more dangerous determinism of the materialists. This is the source, I believe, of his distrust of uncontrolled intellectual speculation. The point of view of the Renaissance thinker who philosophized solely in order that he might philosophize had its logical result in the political realism of Machiavelli, in the ethical libertinism of free livers like the youthful Donne, and in the realistic naturalism of Hobbes, and to all this Milton was unalterably opposed. As he relegates the unguided action of force and chance to chaos so he surrenders the naturalistic point of view in conduct and belief to Satan. It has been suggested that *Paradise Lost* was intended primarily as a reply to

Hobbes.[24] *Leviathan* was published in 1651 and whether or not Milton had read it he must have been aware of the stir of opposition and alarm which it caused in philosophic circles. Both politically and religiously its doctrines would have been to him anathema, and it may well be that in setting out to "justify the ways of God to man" he consciously directed his inspired utterance against this great antagonist of the faith.

Philosophically, then, Milton is a Christian idealist, though he classes himself in theology with the heretics—Arius, Socinus, Arminius, Ochino, Servetus, and who not? His religious as well as his political sympathies were on the side of the independent sects and the individual promoters of spiritual religion in the seventeenth century. In his metaphysics he shares the pantheistic tendencies of his age. His ethical thought, on the other hand, is largely grounded in the study of ancient philosophy. Temperamentally, he felt a strong affinity for the Stoic doctrine, as may easily be seen by his references to the teachings of this school in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*.[25] But he is equally drawn toward Platonism, whether in its original form or as it came to him through the more fanciful interpretation of the Neo-Platonists and the Cabala. Finally, it must be remembered that Milton met

[24] By Marjorie Nicolson in a paper read before the Modern Language Association. A bit of objective evidence is furnished by the statement of Milton's widow to Aubrey that Milton knew but did not like Hobbes, though he acknowledged him a man of parts, and that "their interests and tenets were diametrically opposite."

[25] *P. L.* II, 562–569; *P. R.* IV, 300–308. In both passages Stoicism comes last in the list of Pagan philosophies condemned and is dwelt on most fully, as if it were better worth the pains of a refutation.

many of the speculative and moral ideas which he employs already embodied in imaginative literature and that such applications are likely to have stimulated his poetic mind more powerfully than any abstract statement could do. The influence of Spenser's cosmic speculation and moral allegory is discussed on pp. 205 ff.

The tale of Milton's political sources is hardly less embracing. He inherited his interest in the theory of government from the earlier Renaissance and with it his tendency to find the basis of his convictions in the writings of the ancients. The Greek and Latin historians, orators, poets, and philosophers were to him the great textbooks, next to Holy Writ, of political wisdom. His own republicanism has its roots in Roman soil. But he had also studied with diligence the records and theories of later ages, following a consistent program, some of the details of which may be gathered from his Commonplace Book. Among the outstanding modern contributors to political theory entered in the list are Jean Bodin, Buchanan, Machiavelli, Sir Thomas Smith. His controversial activity sent him scurrying to the authorities, as we have seen, but much of his political study antedates this period. For the liberalism of his own conception of government he had, of course, abundant support, as for example in Buchanan, and none of his ideas are new. A good notion of his position in the history of such speculation may be obtained from any account of political theory in the Renaissance.

THE LITERARY SOURCES

The purpose of this section is to indicate in summary fashion the chief authorities and sources which Milton

probably knew and may have employed in constructing his version of the story of the fall. The discussion here involves primarily the myth or outward narrative, the philosophical and theological elements being considered in the preceding section. The two cannot, however, be absolutely separated.

In discussing the sources of the legend, distinction should be drawn between various types of material from the point of view of Milton's attitude toward them. The Biblical references he considered as solely authoritative. Other sources had weight in his mind about in proportion to their antiquity, except that Jewish and Christian writers would be preferred to Pagan as standing nearer the fountain head of truth. Such materials had, even when manifestly fictitious, a kind of legendary authenticity, and Milton invariably preferred their detail to his own invention. He preferred it, also, when there was a choice, to more modern elaborations. There can, however, be no doubt that he had read more than one literary version of the fall of man and received from them, consciously or unconsciously, suggestions for the artistic handling of his materials.

Obviously no account of the sources of Milton's epic can be considered as exhaustive, for the poem holds as it were in solution the whole of his immense reading. It is not, moreover, except for the Biblical and other ancient authorities, to the works which deal with the identical subject which he treats that we must look for the most vital influences, but rather to those great masterpieces of ancient and modern literature, whatever their subject, which most profoundly impressed him and with which he habitually dwelt. In other words, the essential study of the

literary origins of *Paradise Lost* is the study of the formation of Milton's genius in so far as it was moulded by the minds of other men. I shall attempt to indicate here only such general influences in *Paradise Lost* as can be rather definitely pointed to in connection with some larger feature of the poem.[26]

HEBREW AND PATRISTIC AUTHORITIES. The foundation passage in Scripture for the fall of man is Genesis ii; for the war in Heaven and the fall of Satan (the Dragon) it is Revelation xii. But Milton has employed in one place or another every relevant Biblical text and the student who would examine in full the basis of the legend in its larger outline should consult a Concordance under the heads Adam, Eve, Satan, Lucifer, etc. Scripture is also used for the subsidiary elements of the story. Thus the names and characters of the demons in Book I are largely drawn from the Old Testament. The allegory of Sin and Death in Book II is an elaboration of James 1:15. The whole account of the creation in Book IV is built upon the first chapter of Genesis. The prophecy of Michael is a résumé of Old and New Testament history. Finally, Milton is everywhere dependent on the Bible for detail. Witness the enormous number of Scriptural references cited in such editions as Todd and Verity. An outstanding example is the description of the chariot of Paternal Deity in Book VI, 749 ff., a mosaic from the first chapter of Ezekiel. The borrowings are of course intended to be recognized, and, extending as they do to the minutest turn of phrase, they put one's familiarity with Scripture to a severe test. Milton's poem is, as he

[26] The most comprehensive account of the literary relations of *Paradise Lost* is Woodhull's *The Epic of "Paradise Lost."*

doubtless expected it to be, an invitation to read and reread the Bible, and many an Old or New Testament passage which has been perhaps passed by unnoticed acquires force and meaning when we return to it from Milton's poetic interpretation.

Beyond the canonical books of the Bible there was also the Apocrypha, which would in Milton's mind enjoy an only slightly diminished prestige. The Book of Enoch contained a statement as to the fall of the angels and Milton derived from it at least the name of Satans' standard bearer, Azazael.[27] His employment of Raphael as the genial messenger of God to Adam in his innocence was doubtless suggested by the Book of Tobit, where this angel is the helpful guide and companion of the hero through his several adventures.

Milton also found in the rabbinical commentaries on the Old Testament narrative many legendary details which could not fail to be useful in elaborating and interpreting the myth. This material has not yet been thoroughly examined in relation to Milton and the fact that much of it got into the general current of later Christian tradition makes it difficult to say when Milton's indebtedness is direct. The specific points of contact between these embellishments of the Scriptural account of Adam and Eve and Milton's handling in *Paradise Lost* may readily be gathered from Louis Ginzberg's scholarly and comprehensive account of the rabbinical materials in his *Legends of the Jews,* Vol. I. It is said, for example, that Satan was envious of man in his conjugal relations (Cf. *P. L.* Book

[27] The Book of Enoch was inaccessible in Milton's time, but he had met the passage in question in the Byzantine chronicler Georgius Syncellus. See Saurat, *Milton, Man and Thinker,* p. 254.

IV, lines 504 ff.); that he offered to Eve as proof of the harmlessness of the forbidden fruit the fact that he himself had eaten it and had not died (Cf. *P. L.* Book IX, lines 687 ff.); that he suggested to her God's jealousy as the motive of the prohibition (Cf. *P. L.* Book IX, lines 703 ff.).

Of Milton's knowledge of these Talmudic writings there can be no doubt, since he frequently employs them in his prose works. He mentions, for example, in *Tetrachordon* the idea of the originally bisexual nature of Adam, a rabbinical fancy which he made no use of in *Paradise Lost.* Among the later Hebrew sources certainly known to Milton was the work of the medieval Rabbi Maimonides. There was also the Jewish history of Josephus, and the parallel work of Josippion, called the Pseudo-Josephus, both of which he explicitly refers to. From the latter he appears to have taken suggestions as to the manner in which Satan approached Eve to tempt her and the motive of jealousy which led her to forestall a possible second marriage of Adam's by giving him the apple.[28] The claims which M. Saurat has recently made for Milton's obligations to the body of Jewish mystical philosophy known as the Zohar, though plausible, must be regarded as unproved.

Equally important and almost equally intangible is Milton's debt to the Greek and Latin fathers of the church. We know from the Commonplace Book that he had studied them thoroughly, beginning with the Horton period, along with his reading in the early Byzantine historians. They dealt, extensively of course, with questions connected with

[28] Fletcher, *Milton and Yosippon.*

the Biblical narrative of the fall and supplied many features which became a permanent part of the legend as it was handed on to the Middle Ages. Some of these details they adopted from Jewish speculations which would not otherwise have been accessible to Milton. Thus the conversion of the fallen angels into demons and their identification with the false gods of the gentiles is a piece of Jewish tradition perpetuated in the Fathers. The parallel between Adam and the Messiah, and between Eve and Mary, is also Patristic.[29]

A very important authority for Milton's interpretation of the fall of man, particularly with reference to the elements of sensuality involved in it, was St. Augustine, and every mature student of *Paradise Lost* should read Book XIV, chapters 11-28, of the *City of God,* where the matter is dealt with. It will be evident enough that Milton had before him in interpreting the fall many of the issues raised by this mighty elaborator of Catholic Christianity and that the Protestant poet is influenced even where he is in fundamental disagreement with St. Augustine and is making a point against him. The relation here is primarily philosophical and theological, but there are obvious effects also in the course of the narrative.[30]

It would be useless to go on enumerating the Christian commentators, Hebraists, and theologians from whose

[29] In his pamphlet *Of Prelatical Episcopacy,* Bohn ed. II, p. 430, Milton scolds Irenaeus for making the special relation between Eve and Mary a basis for Papistical idolatry. In *Paradise Lost* he himself adopts the idea. See Saurat, p. 255.

[30] See Saurat, pp. 273 ff., for a full discussion, but Saurat attributes too exclusively to St. Augustine Miltonic ideas which have a manifold source.

works Milton might have taken a turn of thought or even the suggestion for an incident. Their name is legion and the list would extend over centuries. Of medieval writers he naturally made little direct use. His angelology, for example, is not that of the standard Catholic authority, the Pseudo-Dionysius, *De coelesti Hierarchia.* Milton may or may not have read this work, but he would in any case have been sufficiently familiar with the system from Dante's *Divine Comedy.* With the works of many Reformation and contemporary scholars he was acquainted, including those of John Selden, who besides being the greatest legal antiquarian of his time, was also a learned writer on Hebrew antiquities. His *De Diis Syriis* affords many illustrations of Milton's demonology.

The discussion of these authorities has carried us somewhat far afield. I return now to the question of Milton's debt to more specifically literary influences.

FORMATIVE INFLUENCES ON PARADISE LOST IN GREEK AND ROMAN LITERATURE. Ancient epic—the *Iliad,* the *Odyssey,* and the *Aeneid*—furnishes Milton with his authoritative model of form and structure as Scripture does of substance and interpretation. The classical epic conventions were, of course, fixed by Renaissance usage and formulated in critical theory; but it is right to assume in regard to Milton's employment of them that his conscious sources are in each case the ancient originals themselves. They are the precedents to which he wishes the reader to revert, recognizing with admiration the manner in which the new material is ingeniously made to conform to the ancient mould. For the larger structural features of *Paradise Lost,* the *Aeneid,* which itself derives both from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey,* is a sufficient illustration. The

principal points of comparison are as follows: (1) the beginning of the poem with the action proper at a midpoint in the larger story of which it is a part; (2) the introduction of this larger story by way of narrative and prophecy in the course of the narrower action; (3) the alternation of scenes on earth with scenes in Heaven; (4) the alternation of dramatic dialogue with more or less extensive narrative and descriptive passages. Among the smaller features in *Paradise Lost* which have their precedent in ancient epic may be mentioned: (1) the invocation, repeated at important moments of change in the action; (2) the enumeration of the host of Satan in Book I; (3) the representation of a council of leaders in Book II and of divine personages in Book III; (4) the introduction of an allegorical episode, as that of Sin and Death, Book II; (5) epic games, Book II; (6) descriptions of technical processes—e. g., the building of Pandemonium, Book II, and the casting of cannon, Book VI; (7) a celestial visitant warning and advising a mortal, Book V; (8) war, episodes of single combat with challenge and reply, Book VI; (9) historical prophecy divinely inspired, Book XI ff.; (10) dreams, Books V, XII.[31]

Of the other types of ancient literature Greek drama is the most conspicuous in its structural influence on *Paradise Lost*. The way to such influence was opened by the fact that Milton's more particular theme, the fall of man, found closer parallels in classical tragedy than it did in classical epic, and that he had originally planned to cast his material in dramatic form. In the completed poem the careful motivation of the action and the revela-

[31] For specific references and additional points see Buff, *Milton's Paradise Lost, etc.*

tion through dialogue and soliloquy of the inner experience of his characters certainly goes back rather to dramatic than to epic precedent. The literary influences in this respect are rather vague and often they seem more Elizabethan than Greek; but there can be no doubt that in portraying, for example, the unnatural exhilaration of Adam and Eve immediately after their sin Milton is drawing upon the ancient representation of "hybris." The cynical sentiments, moreover, uttered by Adam regarding women (Book X, 889 ff.) are clearly borrowed from kindred expressions in Euripides.

The remaining influence of ancient literature is largely a matter of style and allusion. We may note, however, that Milton's infernal council has a precedent in Claudian's *De Raptu Proserpinae* and that in Eve's description of her first experiences (Book V, 450 ff.) the poet falls for a moment into the spirit of pastoral narrative, recollecting such a passage as the pursuit of Daphne by Apollo in the *Metamorphoses* and employing the inevitable "quem fugis" motive adopted by Ovid from Theocritus.

NARRATIVE TREATMENTS OF THE FALL AND RELATED THEMES IN MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE LITERATURE. *Paradise Lost,* as a Biblical and didactic epic, belongs to a tradition which reaches back to the early centuries of Christian Latin culture and persists in full vigor through the Renaissance. Among the earliest of these is St. Avitus' *De Mosaicae Historiae Gestis* (circa 500 A. D.), which treats of the fall incidentally in the course of a paraphrase of Bible history and lays down the main lines of the literary elaboration of the material. There is no particular

reason for supposing this work to have been known to Milton.[32]

Strong claims have been made, however, for his employment of a work of the same type as that of Avitus which develops the story of the fall of man more nearly in the plot form which it assumes in *Paradise Lost*. This work is the Anglo-Saxon Genesis, attributed to Caedmon, particularly that portion known as Genesis B.[33] The narrative, in outline, is as follows:

Satan and his followers revolt and fall. They are banished to a hill of alternate cold and heat. God, to supply their places, creates the world and places Adam and Eve in a garden of beauty and delight. Satan, in a dramatic address to the rebel angels, laments his present situation, complains of God's injustice in creating man, and plots to extend his empire by corrupting Adam and Eve. He sends an emissary to Earth, pretending to be a messenger from Heaven, tempts Adam in Eve's presence but is repulsed. Turning to Eve who is thoroughly deceived, he succeeds. Adam also falls, and a revulsion of feeling follows, with bitter lamentation and remorse.

The general parallelism here with *Paradise Lost* of course means nothing, since, as we shall see, many of the later treatments, some of which Milton certainly knew, proceed in essentially the same manner. There are, however, some rather striking similarities of detail in Satan's speeches to his followers, in the account of the journey through the abyss to Earth and in the self-

[32] Though the Christian Latin writers were a part of the program at St. Paul's, see Leach, *Milton as Schoolboy*.

[33] See Gurteen, *The Epic of the Fall of Man*.

reproaching dialogue of Adam and Eve after the fall. Satan and his crew fall three days and three nights as in Milton. He contrasts in both poems the horrible scene about him with the delights of his former home. He mentions to his followers the creation of Earth and man as a rumor (cf. *P. L.* I, 650 ff.). He flatteringly praises Eve's beauty, though not, as in Milton, before her sin. There is nothing, however, which can fairly be called conclusive of Milton's indebtedness, and the question resolves itself into one of probability dependent upon the likelihood of Milton's having actually read the Anglo-Saxon poem. It had been published in 1655 at Amsterdam by the Dutch scholar Francis Junius, just at the time when Milton was beginning the actual composition of his epic. Junius lived in England until 1651, when he received the Caedmon manuscript from Bishop Ussher, and must, Masson thinks, almost certainly have been an acquaintance of Milton's.

An outstanding religious work of the Renaissance, Du Bartas' *La Première Semaine* and *La Seconde Semaine,* translated into English in 1598 by Joshua Sylvester as *Du Bartas His Divine Weeks and Works,* specializes on the creation, with much detailed description of the wonders of the universe and with incidental treatments of the fall. This translation Milton knew well and its influence on his youthful poetic style is well established.[34] The general tone and purport of the work is reproduced in the description of the creation in *Paradise Lost,* Book VI, and it may be counted, though vaguely, as helping to determine Milton's predisposition to the writing of a didactical Bib-

[34] See Dunster, *Considerations on Milton's Early Reading.*

lical poem of cyclopedic scope. The Protestant character of Du Bartas' poem was doubtless a feature which commended it to Milton.

RENAISSANCE DRAMATIC VERSIONS OF THE FALL. The story of the fall and redemption of man was a central subject in medieval religious drama and Milton's first conception of it as literary material was deeply influenced by this tradition. It is to be sure, doubtful if he knew any of these plays directly, though he may well have watched as a child the puppet shows of Adam and Eve to which he alludes in *Areopagitica*.[35] But the mysteries were perpetuated in a cultivated and artistic way in the Italian *Sacre Rappresentazione,* and one such drama, the *Adamo* of Giovanni Battista Andreini,[36] published in 1613, appears quite certainly to have been known to Milton. It was first mentioned in connection with *Paradise Lost* in 1727 by Voltaire, who said that Milton derived his suggestion for writing it from having seen a performance of this play on his Italian journey. The relationship is apparently confirmed by similarities, not so much in *Paradise Lost* itself as in the early dramatic plans in the Cambridge manuscript, where the allegorical figures of Labor, Famine, Death, etc., which play a prominent part in Andreini, are listed among the *dramatis personae.*

In changing from dramatic to epic form the influence of the *Adamo* becomes merged with that of general tradition and its specific traces are largely obliterated. We

[35] "A mere artificial Adam like the Adam of the motions."

[36] Translated but not very faithfully by Hayley in Cowper's edition of Milton and the parallels discussed in Hayley's *Life.* Allodoli, *Milton e L'Italia* (see also the introduction to his recent edition of the *Adamo*) is rather perversely skeptical of Milton's knowledge of the work.

may note, however, the symbolic character of the incidents in Adam's vision of the consequences of his sin as a survival of the original suggestion from Andreini.[37] Thus, in witnessing the murder of Cain, Adam cries:

> And have I then seen Death?

and in the description of the lazar house (XI, 480 ff.) the various curses listed as mutes in the dramatic plans are enumerated and personified:

> Despair
> Tended the sick, busiest from couch to couch:
> And over them triumphant Death his dart
> Shook, but delayed to strike.

Of the numerous other motives which this play has in common with *Paradise Lost* the following are most striking: the love of Adam and Eve and the fall through passion; Lucifer in view of Paradise expressing detestation of light; the representations of the passions of pride, revenge, wretchedness in the infernal council; Lucifer's inspiring leadership; Eve beside a crystal fountain; Adam's dignity and erect condition; the serpent as foretaster of the fruit; Eve's soliloquy on its virtue; the serpent's return as victor with a following revulsion of fear; a conflict of Lucifer with the protecting angels; Adam's bitterness against Eve and their subsequent reconciliation; Cherubim as guardians of the gate; Michael as the banishing angel and mouthpiece of God's prophetic comfort. Though no special importance is to be attached to these parallels, since many of the motives occur elsewhere, they

[37] Reinforced, however, by the traditions of Spenserian allegory. See below, p. 208. On the elements of medieval allegory in general in Milton see Ramsay, *Morality Themes in Milton's Poetry*.

will at least serve as a check in the attempt to establish Milton's indebtedness to other versions with which his acquaintance is purely hypothetical.

The influence of one other drama on the fall, the Latin *Adamus Exul* of Hugo Grotius (1601),[38] from which Andreini himself is said to have borrowed, may be regarded as almost equally probable. This work was highly praised by such authorities as Scaliger and Casaubon, and it ranked as one of the outstanding literary contributions of Renaissance humanism. Edward Phillips in his *Theatrum Poetarum,* a work which is thought to contain reflections of Milton's own critical opinions, mentions its author as one of the most distinguished writers of the age. Milton had been introduced to Grotius himself at Paris, and there is every reason to believe that he was thoroughly familiar with his work. Indeed, the deleted caption, "Adam's Banishment," prefixed to the fourth draft of his plan for *Paradise Lost* in the Cambridge Manuscript sounds like a conscious or unconscious reproduction of Grotius' title.

We may now consider the extent of the traceable influence of the *Adamus* on *Paradise Lost.* Unlike Andreini's *Adamo,* Grotius' play is a unified and coherent tragedy, on classical lines. It begins with a long soliloquy of Satan, who proceeds from despair and defiance to a determination to ruin Adam. In Act II Adam is instructed in the creation of the world and the fall of Satan by an angel, and holds loving dialogue with Eve. In Act III Satan in his own form tempts Adam and is firmly repulsed. In

[38] There is an English translation by Barham. See Verity's *Paradise Lost,* introduction, for the most competent discussion of the influence of Andreini and Grotius on Milton.

Act IV he approaches Eve as a serpent, flatters her, and finally persuades her to eat the apple. Adam enters seeking Eve. He is horrified at her deed, but yields to her love and eats. In Act V Satan triumphs in monologue. Adam is tormented by phantoms of despair. Eve endeavors to console him and restrains him from suicide, offering herself as a willing sacrifice to his vengeance. Adam expresses his great love of her. Jehovah, appearing in person, pronounces judgment, and summons the Cherubim to drive them forth. They enter into exile with expression of sorrow at the loss of Eden. The first four acts are each concluded with an angelic chorus.

In general outline this is more remote from Milton's drafts than is the *Adamo*. Milton evidently chose the mystery conception of the theme, with its allegorical attendants, as a means of displaying its wider significance in the scheme of human destiny, and this broader plan persists in the completed epic. But Grotius' play stands much nearer to Milton's actual development of the more dramatic part of his material in the coherence of the plot, in the superior handling of the human motives, and in the philosophical and ethical dignity which pervades the whole. It seems probable that Milton moved farther from Andreini and nearer to Grotius as the plan developed in his mind. When he actually undertook the composition of a drama on the fall he began not with angelic or allegorical preliminaries, as in Andreini and the preserved drafts, but with a soliloquy of Satan, as in the *Adamus Exul*. In the substance of this soliloquy, as in the whole development of the temptation, fall, repentance, and banishment of Adam and Eve, many of the Miltonic elements are common to both Grotius and Andreini. But the detail is

often closer to the Latin than to the Italian treatment. Thus all three poets make much of the brilliant colors and spectacular approach of the serpent; but Milton and Grotius both discard the rabbinical notion of his human face and in general their descriptions of his labyrinthine antics are more nearly identical. In the accounts of Satan's procedure in the temptation of Eve, Grotius, like Milton, makes him suggest a fatalistic philosophy, a detail unrepresented in the *Adamo*. The despair of Adam also is less subtly and elaborately developed in Andreini than in the others and there is no parallel to the proposal of suicide as a way of anticipating the penalty, a proposal which comes in Milton only from Eve, but from each in turn in Grotius. Other similar specific resemblances between *Paradise Lost* and *Adamus Exul* are: the geographical description of Eden; Satan's contrast of his own misery with the bliss of Adam and Eve; Adam's hymn of the visible universe as God's handiwork; the angelic ministration to Adam of cosmic instruction and moral warning (Adam's question about the stars, his narrative of his first awakening, the angel's story of Lucifer's rebellion and of the creation, his emphasis of Adam's superiority to the beasts are all included, though briefly, in the drama). In Milton's use of such motives as the flattering of Eve by her tempter, his suggestion of God's jealousy as the motive of the prohibition, the reunion of Adam and Eve after their separation, Adam's horror at her deed, the appeal to his love, the changes in nature after the fall, the reconciliation of the pair after their estrangement, and many others, it is impossible to tell which of his two models he is more closely following.

For the other Renaissance dramas of the fall which

have been alleged as Milton's sources much less can be said. The Italian plays mentioned by Pearce, Peck, and Todd are comparatively obscure and have no outstanding features in common with Milton's which are not conventional. The much argued case for the Dutch poet Vondel's *Lucifer* and his *Adam in Banishment* is less impressive when we consider Vondel's own debt to Grotius, Du Bartas, and other writers whom Milton knew.[39] The *Lucifer* was printed in 1654, the *Adam* in 1664, too late in either case to have much affected Milton's original plan. The verbal similarities, when one reads Vondel in the original and not in a Miltonized translation, are inconclusive, and there is the serious question whether Milton in his blindness and with a probably limited knowledge of Dutch could easily have obtained a close familiarity with the work of his contemporary. The significant kinship between *Lucifer* and *Paradise Lost* is that which arises from the independent handling of identical materials by the two great poets of similar culture and imaginative inheritance.

ITALIAN ROMANTIC EPIC; SPENSER; THE FLETCHERS; SHAKESPEARE; MARLOWE. It would naturally be expected that Milton's enthusiasm for the Renaissance masters of romantic narrative, which must have dominated his purpose so long as he continued to cherish the idea of an Arthurian epic, would leave an important impress on the poem which he actually did compose, however alien its theme. In form the looser structure of Boiardo, Ariosto, and Spenser was of course repudiated by him. Tas-

[39] The fullest statement of the case for Vondel's influence is that of Edmundson, *Milton and Vondel.* For a more critical review of the evidence see Verity, *Samson Agonistes,* Appendix.

so's *Gerusalemme Liberata* and its critical defense would have fortified in him the conception of a Christian epic severely classical in outline, but with the more authoritative models of Virgil and Homer before him he needed no recourse in the matter of epic structure to a derived work. The influence of the Italians is quite traceable, however, in many details of *Paradise Lost*. To mention only the outstanding instances, the humorous and satiric description of the Paradise of Fools in Book III is plainly based on Ariosto's picture of a similar limbo of ecclesiastical vanities in the moon (*Orlando Furioso,* Canto XXXIV, stanzas 70 ff.), a passage which Milton had noted in the Commonplace Book before his Italian journey, and the infernal council in Book II, though Milton was familiar with similar scenes from many sources, has much in common with Tasso's account in the fourth Canto of the *Jerusalem.*[40]

To Spenser his debt was more profound. The beginnings of it have already been seen in *Comus,* where the adaptation of myth and allegory to the purpose of earnest philosophical and moral idealism is dominated by the spirit of Milton's great Elizabethan predecessor. To distinguish the Spenserian element in *Paradise Lost* is not so easy, but a suggestion of its importance is afforded by Milton's praise of Spenser in *Areopagitica* as a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas and by his remark to Dryden that Spenser was his "original." Spenser was a better teacher partly because he was a poet embodying his moral lessons in beautiful imaginative forms, and partly

[40] For discussions of the influence of Tasso see Pommrich *Milton's Verhaeltniss zu Tasso* and for Milton's Italian relations in general see Allodoli, *Milton e L'Italia.*

because he was a humanist, deriving his philosophy from ancient and not from scholastic thought. As such he stood in Milton's thought as the truest exemplar among his own countrymen of the poetic function and was gladly acknowledged, in spite of differences of temper, theme, and style, as a guide and master. The relationship between *Paradise Lost* and *The Faërie Queene* is accordingly to be sought not in resemblances of incident or phrase but in fundamental community of poetic aim and method. It is pointed out by Professor Greenlaw in his illuminating discussion of this subject[41] that there is a striking analogy between Milton's interpretation of the moral issues involved in Adam's fall and the representation of virtue under trial in the person of Sir Guyon (*F. Q.* Book II). The basic teaching in each case is that of temperance interpreted according to Platonic ethics as the supremacy of the rational over the passionate principle in the soul. For such doctrine in the abstract Milton needed, of course, no source but Plato and the Renaissance tradition generally, but the claim that he found in Spenser an application of Platonic idealism which made a profound impression on his mind and which stimulated and guided his own imaginative activity is one which cannot be denied.

Professor Greenlaw also finds in Spenser's cosmic speculations materials which he believes entered deeply into the substance of Milton's poetic thought. Both poets draw, to be sure, upon the common stock of ancient, medieval, and Renaissance philosophy for their conception of man and nature, and their employment of an identical scheme

[41] *A Better Teacher than Aquinas* and *Spenser's Influence on "Paradise Lost."*

of the universe is in itself no proof of Milton's indebtedness. But here, again, we may safely assume that Spenser's poetic embodiment of the cosmic vision in the last two of his *Fowre Hymns* and elsewhere was an early means of rousing Milton's interest in such matters and of firing his imagination to the height of his tremendous theme. Specifically Spenser's account of the mystic garden of Adonis furnished detail for Milton's luxuriant Garden of Eden; his expressions regarding Chaos as the womb and grave of nature and the employment of Demogorgon and Night as personifications of the Abyss are echoed in *Paradise Lost,* Book III. Finally, there are touches in common[42] between Spenser's story of the attempt of Mutabilitie to regain Heaven and Milton's of the ascent of Satan from Hell which appear to show that the later poet felt the analogy between the two episodes and remoulded his traditional materials under the influence of the philosophical myth created by his predecessor. Minor reminiscences of Spenserian phrase are common throughout Milton's poetry.

The influence of Spenser in coloring Milton's poetic ideas and expression blends with and is often indistinguishable from that of the seventeenth century Spenserians, particularly Giles and Phineas Fletcher, whose work he had known and had felt the power of from his boyhood.[43] Though Milton owed, perhaps, nothing as fundamental to these two poets as he owed to their original,

[42] Note besides those mentioned by Greenlaw the sceptical suggestion by Mutabilitie that nature is not really dependent upon God (F. Q. VII, vii, 49. Cf. *P. L.* IX, 720).

[43] Fully discussed by Grosart, *Poems of Phineas Fletcher,* Essay, pp. 210 ff., 278 ff. See also Cory, *Spenser, the School of the Fletchers and Milton.*

there are, nevertheless, clear traces of the influence of their imaginative conceptions on his own. This is most notable in the case of Phineas, whose infernal council in *The Apollyonists* and its Latin counterpart, *Locustae,* includes a representation of Satan as a majestic and defiant being which bears obvious points of resemblance to Milton's. The same author's allegorical figure of Hamartia in *The Purple Island* and of Sin in *The Apollyonists* is the chief imaginative prototype of the horrible creature whom Satan encounters at Hell gate (*P. L.* III). The case for Giles Fletcher is more a matter of phraseology. Grosart lists such parallels as this:

> Heaven wakes with all his eyes
> Whom to behold but thee, Nature's desire?
> *P. L.* V, 44–5.
>
> Heaven awakened all his eyes
> To see another sunne at midnight rise.
> *Christ's Victory in Heaven,* stanza 78.

The theme of *Christ's Victory in Heaven* is the same as that of Book III of *Paradise Lost,* except that Fletcher has preserved the old allegory of the Daughters of God while Milton has put the Heavenly debate into the mouth of the Father and the Son. But the provision in the dramatic plans for a discussion of man's fate by Mercy, Justice, and Wisdom points to *Christ's Victory* as an influence in Milton's elaboration of the scheme of redemption, which is very scantily represented in Grotius and Andreini. Broadly speaking, the Fletchers are Milton's most immediate precedents in a kind of poetry which puts a religious subject matter in terms of sensuous beauty. Some critics are inclined to attribute to them a much larger

share in furnishing suggestion to Milton's imagination in the actual epic of *Paradise Lost* than to the continental sources which first led him to project a drama on this theme. Claims, in this connection, have also been made for the *Davideis,* a Biblical epic published in 1656 by Abraham Cowley.[44]

Of the other English writers to whom Milton owed inspiration Marlowe and Shakespeare are the most conspicuous. Marlowe's style, with its grandiose sweep and its roll of euphonious and exotic proper names, is generally recognized as having assisted in moulding Milton's own. This relationship is discussed in Chapter VI. A flash, moreover, of magnificent insight in the elder poet's representation of Mephistopheles,

> Why, this is Hell, nor am I out of it,

apparently finds an echo in Satan's

> Which way I fly is Hell, myself am Hell.

It would be difficult to find any other specific parallel.

In the case of Shakespeare the relationship is more complex. Milton's eager reading of the plays is well attested, nor did their profound difference in temperament and Milton's later reservations regarding Shakespeare's art diminish the impression which they left upon his memory. How far Shakespeare permanently determined Milton's modes of conceiving dramatic characters and situations it is hard to say, but we seem to catch in the representation of Satan plotting against Adam and Eve an echo of the

[44] Kirsten, *Studien.* Milton's third wife is reported to have said that Spenser, Shakespeare, and Cowley were his favorite poets. Todd, I, 162.

similar relations of Iago, Othello, and Desdemona, or in his unrepentant remorse a parallel to the soliloquy of King Claudius. Adam's revulsion against Eve is analogous to that of Antony against Cleopatra, his meditation on the burden and mystery of human life (Book XI) like Hamlet's.[45] The parallels, however, though suggestive and, I believe, significant, are intangible, and the case for Shakespeare's influence is largely a matter of specific similarities of phrase. Professor Alvin Thaler [46] has recently collected a surprising array of such resemblances and his list, when all allowances are made for accident, remains a testimony to the degree to which Milton's poetic speech was enriched by the fertile imagination of his greatest Elizabethan predecessor.

In general we may say of Milton's echoings of incident, idea, and phrase in *Paradise Lost* and elsewhere that they illustrate the essentially literary character of his inspiration, the wide range of his reading, and the extraordinarily assimilative quality of his mind. A hint which helps account for the manifold reminiscences in his work is given by the anonymous biographer in his account of Milton's occupations during the period when he was composing *Paradise Lost*. "The evenings he likewise spent in reading some choice poets, by way of refreshment after the day's toil, *and to store his fancy against the morning.*" The cry of plagiarism is, of course, absurd. Milton's own attitude is implied in a statement in *Eikonoklastes:* "Borrowing, if it be not bettered by the borrower, among good authors is accounted plagiarie." He himself certainly leaves nothing as he found it. That is why the

[45] Hanford, *The Dramatic Element.*
[46] *The Shakespearean Element in Milton.*

resemblances which I have been discussing are in general so shadowy. All is transformed to the substance of his imagination. The Miltonic accent is everywhere, and when the labors of the source hunters are done, *Paradise Lost* remains one of the most original works in English or in any literature.

CHAPTER V

PARADISE REGAINED AND SAMSON AGONISTES

MILTON'S last two works appeared in 1671, in a single volume bearing the following title: *Paradise Regained. A Poem. In IV Books. To which is added Samson Agonistes. The Author John Milton.* The date of entry in the Stationers' Register is September 20, 1670. The poems had been licensed on July 2 of the same year. No positive evidence of the date or order of their composition is available. The natural inference, however, that *Paradise Regained,* being, as it is, a kind of sequel to *Paradise Lost,* would have followed that work directly, is supported by Thomas Ellwood's account of the part which he himself played in suggesting it. He had returned the manuscript of *Paradise Lost* to Milton at Chalfont St. Giles toward the end of the year 1665 with the remark, "Thou hast said much of Paradise lost, but what hast thou to say of Paradise found?" When he visited the poet again some time after his return to London in 1666 Milton showed him his second poem, saying, "This is owing to you; for you put it in my head by the question you put to me at Chalfont, which before I had not thought of." Of *Samson Agonistes* Phillips says, "It was begun, finished, and printed after the publication of its predecessor, i. e., August, 1667." This, however, leaves

but a brief period for the composition of two major works.

In spite of Ellwood's statement it seems likely that both had been in Milton's mind for some time. In *The Reason of Church Government* (see Appendix) he had expressed an equal interest in three literary forms, the long epic like the *Aeneid,* the short epic like the Book of Job, and tragedy on classical lines. *Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained,* and *Samson Agonistes* perfectly answer to the terms of these respective descriptions. The writing of all three represents a complete fulfillment of Milton's program. As to the subjects, the Cambridge manuscript notes written circa 1641 contain the suggestion of a drama on the life of Christ—"Christus Patiens," and five topics from the history of Samson: "Samson Pyrsophoros," "Samson Hybristes," "Samson Marrying," "Ramath-Lechi," and "Dagonalia." The theme of *Paradise Regained* was in a sense logically necessitated by *Paradise Lost,* not that Milton had failed in the earlier poem to present Christ's part in the theologian scheme of salvation, but because he wished to give the actual process in Christ, considered as a representative of humanity, of the successful meeting of temptation corresponding to the failure of Adam in a similar situation. The analogy between Adam and Samson had already been noted in *Paradise Lost,* IX, 1059–62.

PARADISE REGAINED

SOURCES. The poem follows step by step the incidents of the temptation as given in the Gospel of Luke (the order in Matthew is different). The earlier events of Christ's life are introduced in retrospect and the later

by implication. The elaboration of detail is largely the work of Milton's own thought and imagination, but the recollection of Giles Fletcher's treatment of the same theme in *Christ's Victory and Triumph* was clearly with him as he wrote. In his interpretation of the several temptations, moreover, Milton had behind him also a long line of Scriptural commentary by eminent divines with whose work he was familiar. This material deserves to be carefully explored by Milton students.

In its structure the poem is beyond doubt deeply influenced by the Book of Job, which, as we have seen, Milton regarded as a model of the brief epic. Milton parallels the trial of Christ and the trial of Job in Book I, line 146 ff. The two works have the common characteristic of proceeding mainly by dialogue with short introductory, concluding, and linking passages of narrative. The adoption of a certain amount of the technique of classical epic, e. g., the invocation, was inevitable, but on the whole there is very little of such influence as compared with *Paradise Lost*. The use of adornment from ancient poetry and myth and the echoing of classical passages are also rare.

On the other hand, the poem is filled in an even more remarkable degree than its predecessor with the fruit of Milton's learning. We feel, for example, in the description of Imperial Rome, in the résumé of the intellectual achievement of Greece, in the exaltation of Hebrew expression, the result of a lifetime of intense and sympathetic study of three literatures. The historical and political grasp displayed in the account of the situation in the time of Christ bears witness to the close attention which Milton had devoted to these matters in ancient and

modern writers. The philosophic meditations on fame and the other objects of human desire, so rich in concrete illustration, and so comprehensive in generalization, are eloquent of Milton's familiarity with the detail of recorded human experience and with the pronouncements of all the sages upon its meaning. We can trace in *Paradise Regained* the recollection of more than one of the topics which Milton had set down with appropriate quotation and reference in the Commonplace Book. Thus the remarks on the office and duties of the king have an interesting correspondence with certain passages from Machiavelli and other authorities which Milton records in the Commonplace Book under the heading Rex. But all this is digested and assimilated until it has become part of the substance of Milton's individual thought and is no longer recognizable as borrowing.

EXPOSITORY OUTLINE. The first seven lines of Book I link the theme of the new poem with that of *Paradise Lost.* Christ's successful foiling of the tempter is the logical counterpart of Adam's succumbing to his wiles. The invocation is made directly to the Divine Spirit, and not, as in *Paradise Lost,* to a Muse or other symbol. The starting point of the action is the hearing by Satan of the divine pronouncement at the baptism of Jesus "This is my beloved son." A new council is summoned in middle air and Satan again appointed to the mission of seduction. The scene then changes to Heaven and God predicts to the assembled angels the victory of the new Adam in the coming conflict, as he had earlier predicted the fall of man. The angels sing a psalm of triumph. Christ now enters the wilderness and recalls in self-communion the events of his career which have brought

him as he supposed to the moment of the beginning of his ministry. The intent of God in conducting him into this desert place he does not yet perceive. After forty days Satan appears disguised as an old man, proposing, in language almost as bare as that of the Scriptural account itself, the terms of the first temptation. Christ's rejection is equally brief and simple. The words "why dost thou then suggest to me distrust?" clearly reveal Milton's interpretation of the incident. Satan has, to quote the commentary of Calvin on the first temptation [1] "Made a direct attack on the faith of Christ, in the hope that, after destroying his faith, he would drive Christ to unlawful and wicked methods of procuring food." In the succeeding dialogue Satan, now revealed in his true person, utters a fawning and hypocritical complaint. Christ pronounces his misery deserved and interposes no objection to his proposal of further conversation. The scene ends with Satan's vanishing and the coming on of night. In this book Milton makes little effort to enrich or elaborate his theme. His language is restrained by reverence. The plain meaning speaks.

In Book II Andrew, Simon, and others who have been baptized with Christ experience perplexity and a sense of loss at his disappearance, but they give expression to the hope that God will not allow his promises to be defeated. Mary also accepts in patience the absence of her son. The scene now reverts to middle air, whither Satan returns for further deliberation with his peers. His speech to them is entirely lacking in the high spirit of defiant ardor which had informed his utterance in the first books of

[1] Quoted by Gilbert, *The Temptation in "Paradise Regained,"* p. 4.

Paradise Lost. Belial, too, has lost his eloquence, though not his sensuality; his vain suggestion "set women in his eye" is scornfully rejected. Satan's superior intelligence perceives that the simple allurement which has sufficed for Adam's weakness is here of no avail. He proposes manlier objects—honor, glory, and popular praise—as the material of his second and more elaborate attempt, preparing first, however, a more elemental appeal to appetite and natural need. This introductory approach is not, as some critics have thought, a continuation or inartistic repetition of the first temptation, which has been definitely ended and is marked off by an intervening night and day, and which, besides, as I have said, represented something quite different from a mere offer of bread. It is rather the first step in the second, which is to comprise, in the Biblical phrase, "the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them." [2] Milton proceeds, as we shall see, through a kind of scale of values, and he appropriately begins with bodily luxury, the lowest and simplest object of worldly attainment. It is proper, therefore, that the offer should take the form of a gorgeous Roman banquet with all the accompanying blandishments of sense.

Christ's preliminary dream of food is parallel to the dream of Eve in Book V of *Paradise Lost.* We are told that now, for the first time, he hungers. Satan asks, "If food were now before thee set wouldst thou not eat?" and Christ replies, "Thereafter as I like the giver." The point is that the satisfaction of a fleshly need is not in itself a sin, but may become so when a moral issue is involved. The rich repast is the offering of Satan and is

[2] See Gilbert, *The Temptation in Paradise Regained.*

accordingly rejected. Christ's victory, here, as later, is a victory of temperance, the triumph of reason over desire.

Wealth is next offered as a means to power. Jesus in reply disparages riches without virtue. Material possession is the "wise man's cumbrance if not snare." As for the scepter which wealth can buy, true kingship is the sovereignty of man over himself, and the royal crown, golden in show, is but a wreath of thorns.

In Book III, without break in the action, Satan proceeds to propose the higher object—glory—a fruit of empire as empire had been of wealth. In a noble passage Christ anatomizes the conception, expressing Milton's scorn of the brutish fame of conquerors, and setting beside it the true fame of those spiritual heroes who sought it not. The lines are linked with the digression on the "last infirmity of noble mind" in *Lycidas* and the conclusion is the same.

As an abstract object of ambition, glory is the highest Satan has to offer. He now turns, more subtly, to matters directly connected with the fulfillment of Christ's mission, and, under guise of giving him experience toward its accomplishment, he exhibits the then kingdoms of the earth before his eyes. First, Parthia, a symbol of military strength and efficiency, inviting leadership, and affording a golden opportunity for the domination of the world. Christ's reply is that all arms are vanity, an argument of human weakness rather than of strength. His own weapons are spiritual, and his time is not yet come. As for the ten tribes of Israel, their deliverance from bondage is no work of his but is in the hands of God.

At the beginning of Book IV Satan, with increasing

hopelessness, sets the face of his intended victim to the west. Rome in her glory, present mistress of the world, is at his will. It is a type of grandeur and magnificence, and, as such, is refused, like the ostentation vain of arms before. Technically, this concludes the offer of the kingdoms of the earth, and at this point Satan, futilely, since they have already been rejected, proposes his condition: "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Milton has, however, an important and characteristic addition to make. Christ has completely vindicated his superiority to all the glory which allures the minds of the great mass of talented ambitious men. It has, indeed, been the public glamour of these things rather than the things themselves on which Satan has relied to appeal to a spirit whom he recognized from the first as above succumbing to the inglorious enticements of secret sensuality. Even the banquet was a kind of entertainment calculated to amaze the populace by its magnificence and lavishness. There remains a type of glory which by its very nature appeals only to the few and can hardly be said to belong to the fleshly kingdoms of the world—the glory namely, of wisdom and intellectual achievement, represented best by ancient Athens. With new enthusiasm Milton makes his Satan portray this loftier ideal in all its beauty. The passage is a wonderful résumé of the supreme accomplishments of Pagan culture—its creation of the great literary forms of epic, drama, lyric; its majestic oratory; its final fruit in philosophy, "from Heaven descended to the low-roofed house of Socrates," and proceeding from his fertile suggestion to the development of all the memorable schools of thought. Here, then, is an object, the attraction of which Milton himself felt

in fullest measure and which, when offered to the historical Christ as a means at once congenial to his temper and apparently harmonious with his spiritual aims, might well be supposed to prove alluring. He replies, not altogether by rejecting it, but by exalting above it the inspired literature of the Hebrews, superior at every point in spiritual truth. Without despising the claims of intellectual culture and the arts, Christ avoids the snare of pride—that last infirmity of the noble mind divinely gifted with the capability of adding to the world's precious heritage of spiritual truth and beauty.

This test concludes the second temptation. Abruptly and in anger Satan proceeds to a final desperate attempt. The new method which he adopts is that of violence—the last resource of those whom the arts of reasoning have failed. Such, at least, is Milton's curious interpretation of the third temptation. Christ is set upon a pinnacle of the temple, with the scornful word:

> There stand, if thou wilt stand: to stand upright
> Will ask thee skill . . . if not to stand
> Cast thyself down.

And Satan, with his persistent scepticism, looks to see him fall. The answer is no act of Christ's but a miracle. To the amazement of his enemy he remains divinely supported in his "uneasy station" and it is Satan himself who falls.[3] A throng of angels now bear the Lord from on high to a flowery valley and give him the food which he has refused at Satan's hand. The Heavenly choir sing triumph and the founding of a fairer Paradise. The

[3] See Gilbert's interpretation, *The Temptation in "Paradise Regained."*

poem ends with the quiet return of Jesus to his mother's house.

SAMSON AGONISTES

SOURCES. Milton is dependent on Scripture (Judges, xiii–xvi) for the material of *Samson Agonistes* and in the main on that alone. There is no convincing evidence that he was acquainted with other literary treatments of the theme. The case for his indebtedness to Vondel's *Samson,* published in 1660, a drama in classical form, dealing like Milton's with the last day of the hero's life, has been strongly urged by Edmundson [4] and attacked with equal vehemence by Verity [5] and others. The similarities in phrase are not very striking, and the likenesses in plot structure hardly greater than would naturally result from an independent moulding of the Biblical materials into the form of ancient tragedy. We have already seen that the specific subject of Samson's death had long been present in Milton's mind. The development of the action by a series of visits to Samson finds no parallel in Vondel.

Some minor details are said to have been taken from the history of Samson in the fifth book of Josephus. Verity points to a description of the ruins at Gaza of the "theater of Samson" in George Sandys' *Relation of Foreign Travel* as having very probably furnished Milton with hints as to the kind of structure which Samson pulled down on the heads of the Philistines. A *History of Samson* had been written by Francis Quarles, but there are no specific parallels with Milton.

[4] *Milton and Vondel.*
[5] *Samson Agonistes,* Appendix.

Aside from the Bible, the great formative influence in *Samson Agonistes* is classical tragedy. The relation here is so important as to deserve separate discussion.

RELATIONS TO GREEK DRAMA AND TO THE CLASSICAL THEORY OF TRAGEDY. On the title page of the first edition of *Samson Agonistes* Milton printed as a motto Aristotle's definition of tragedy—"the imitation of a serious action, etc., effecting through pity and fear a purification of such emotions." In his introductory note he discusses the crux of this definition, the old question as to what is meant by the catharsis of the emotions, and gives an interpretation which has commended itself to modern critics.[6] Tragedy converts the emotions to which we are subject from a source of pain to a source of pleasure by artistically embodying them in a dramatic fiction. The pity and fear stirred up in us in the theater are a homeopathic dose, purging the mind of its unwholesome private passions. This idea and purpose are prominently in Milton's consciousness as he writes the poem. He makes Samson describe his own inner agony in terms which strongly suggest the medical figure used in the introduction, and he has the chorus indicate at the close the calming and ennobling effect which the witnessing this great event has had on the minds of the spectators.[7] Perhaps he also recognized an analogous effect upon himself, a tempering of such bitter moods as may occasionally have come upon him in his old age. At any rate Milton took tragedy very seriously and regarded it as a significant literary form. To be such, however, it must be written in

[6] It is identical with that of the Italian, Minturno.

[7] See Hanford, *"Samson Agonistes" and Milton in Old Age.* Much of the present discussion is condensed from this study.

the direct tradition of classical antiquity; it must eschew the sensationalism of the modern stage and behave itself according to the body of principles laid down by Aristotle in the *Poetics,* elaborated by the critics of the Renaissance, and illustrated by the individual dramas of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides.[8] *Samson Agonistes* is offered to us as a model of what, in these respects, a modern tragedy should be. We are invited not only to read it but to test it by comparison with the greatest in its kind.

The chief points at which *Samson Agonistes* stands in obvious contrast with Elizabethan drama and in conformity "with ancient rule and best example" are the following: (1) the limitation of the scope of the action to the final episode in Samson's career; (2) the strict preservation of the unities of time and place; (3) the employment of the chorus and the messenger. The adherence to these and other conventions was not with Milton a mere mechanical or formal matter; it was rather an attempt to secure by their use the artistic effect—the *symmetria prisca* —which he admired in ancient, and felt the lack of in modern drama. He speaks of "verisimilitude and decorum," two familiar terms in the Aristotelian criticism of the Renaissance, as the real objects aimed at. Elsewhere he calls decorum, or artistic propriety, "the great masterpiece to observe." These devices were not his masters but his instruments, and his play, as a consequence, is a recreation rather than an imitation of Greek art. The narrowing of the action, the restriction of the number of

[8] See Jebb, *"Samson Agonistes" and the Hellenic Drama,* and Baum, *"Samson Agonistes" Again.* Mahaffy, *What have the Greeks done for Civilization?,* p. 51, finds Milton's development of his theme primarily Euripidean.

speaking characters, the limitation of the dramatic time to a single day, and the avoidance of a change of scene enabled him to achieve a certain concentration of effect. The chorus served the purpose at once of interpreting the emotions appropriate to the successive moments in the action, of clarifying the larger significance of the whole, and of rounding out the story by allusions to Samson's past. The narration of the messenger was a substitute for the actual representation of the catastrophe, which Milton avoided, not only because the Greeks had done so, but because verisimilitude, dignity, and the desire to focus attention not on the sensational event but on its dramatic significance all demanded it.

But Milton was deeply influenced by the content as well as by the form of ancient tragedy. He found precedents for his suffering hero in more than one tragic figure of antiquity and he remoulded him to a considerable degree in their great images. First of these was Heracles, a giant of strength like Samson, and performing incredible labors, but subject also like Samson to a spiritual weakness and becoming enthralled and ultimately brought to destruction by the influence of woman. The specific Heracles drama which here enters into comparison with Milton's is the *Deianira* of Sophocles. In other features *Samson Agonistes* is closer akin to the *Oedipus at Colonnus,* the direct influence of which is very apparent. Oedipus, blind and helpless by his own error, is visited by a succession of friends and enemies. He resists the blandishments and threats of Creon as Samson resists those of the Philistines. His former greatness and present misery are remembered in dialogue and chorus. His end

is a triumph, though of different sort. Particularly noticeable as a feature derived from the very essence of Greek tragedy is Milton's attempt to interpret Samson's tragic error as hybris, that overconfidence which leads men to trust too much to their own power and provokes an attack on them by the jealous gods. Milton's conception of Providence rather than Fate as the ruling force in the affairs of men prevents him, however, from presenting his hero's struggle exactly in the terms of ancient drama. The principle of hybris is invoked again in the description of the Philistines and a final chorus applies to them precisely the formula of the Greeks. Offended at their mad pride God sends to them a spirit of frenzy—the ancient Ate—who impairs their judgments and makes them bring on themselves, by their own acts, an avenging Nemesis.

In the detail of his drama Milton is often reminiscent of the ancients. He employs stichomythia or a series of alternate speeches of a line length each, and he imitates the riddling question and answer characteristic of such dialogue. In the substitution of alternate episode and chorus for the modern act division, and in the distinction between the portions of the play in iambic pentameter and those in lyric measures ("chorus and iambic," as he describes them in *Paradise Regained*), he is also in accord with classic usage. The bitter reflections on the errors brought on mankind by woman are Euripidean. So also is the formula "all is best," at the close. The great utterances in which Samson and the chorus recite the tale of human suffering are repetitions, though with a strong accent of individuality, of similar generalizations which

pervade Greek drama. Finally, Milton, like the Greeks, particularly Sophocles, makes conscious and consistent use of irony throughout his work.

INTERPRETATION. The outward action of *Samson Agonistes* is summarized by Milton himself in an argument prefixed to the original edition. Though he does not divide the play into acts he intimates in his prefatory note that a five-act structure is discernible. Editors are in practical agreement in analyzing this as follows:

Act I. Lines 1–325. Samson's soliloquy and dialogue with the Chorus.

Act II. Lines 326–710. Samson's dialogue with Manoa.

Act III. Lines 711–1060. The visit of Dalilah.

Act IV. Lines 1061–1440. The visits of Harapha and the officer.

Act V. Lines 1441–end. Dialogue of the Chorus and Manoa and the narrative of the Messenger.

This enumeration of incidents gives no indication of the real dramatic movement, and *Samson Agonistes* has often been said to be deficient in this respect. Samuel Johnson declared that it had a beginning and a middle but no end. To his mind the various visits were merely episodic, accomplishing nothing in the development of plot and climax. Such a judgment does injustice to the subtlety of Milton's inward interpretation of his theme. The drama is concerned essentially with the fallen Samson's recovery of God's lost favor. This process involves his punishment and repentance and a sort of probation under new trial, a trial provided by the timidity and lack of faith of Manoa and the Chorus, by the attempted seductions of Dalilah, and by the threats of Harapha. The

spiritual movement is really much richer than one at first observes.

At the opening Samson is a spectacle of tragic woe. He expresses in language which rivals the greatest utterances of Shakespeare or the Greeks the misery and debasement of his present state, and the first chorus, unheard by him, echoes and interprets his lament, with emphasis on the contrast between what he once was and what he now is. In the ensuing dialogues his attention is diverted to the causes and significance of his suffering. The memory of his fault is more bitter than the punishment wherewith it is visited. He is, however, firm in his conviction, against the intimation of the Chorus, that he was, even in his marriage choices, led by God as his chosen instrument, and he replies to their somewhat malicious

> Yet Israel still serves with all his tribes

by imputing the fault to Israel's governors who neglected the opportunities which his deeds of strength made for them. The sight of Manoa wakes "another inward grief," and his words are a goad to Samson's bitter remembrance. To his implied doubt of the justice of God's dealings in apparently electing his son as the champion of Israel and then deserting him, Samson again opposes the attitude of faith. God's ways are just. Though he himself, through his own fault, has advanced the cause of Dagon and brought doubt into the feeble hearts of Israel, "propense enough before," he remains unshaken in the belief that God will not long

> Connive or linger, thus provoked,
> But will arise and his great name assert.

He has as yet no intimation that he is himself to become the instrument of God's purposes, but he instinctively rejects his father's proposal to treat with the Philistine lords for his release. The whole result of the mistaken attempts at comfort has been to sharpen Samson's misery. The scene culminates in a spiritual outburst, expressive no longer of the hero's physical suffering but of the agony of soul which springs from full contemplation of his sins "and sense of Heaven's desertion."

Henceforth we have recovery. By confronting his own guilt without evasion, and by resisting the temptation to doubt that God's ways are just or to fear for the ultimate triumph of his cause, Samson has won the right to be put to proof a second time. His firmness is subjected first to the insidious approaches of Dalilah, whose visit, however doubtfully motivated in itself, is essential to the idea of the drama. Her plea is specious, but Samson remains unmoved, the significance of his victory being pointed out in the choric comment,

> Yet beauty, though injurious, hath strange power,
> After offence returning, to regain
> Love once possessed, nor can be easily
> Repulsed, without much inward passion felt
> And secret sting of amorous remorse.

He next confronts physical force in the person of Harapha, who collapses, like all brute menace, before the champion's indifference to fear, and the Chorus, participating for the moment in Samson's strength, sings the great ode,

O how comely it is, and how reviving,
When God into the hands of their deliverer
Puts invincible might,
To quell the mighty of the earth, the oppressor,
The brute and boistrous force of violent men.

They are, of course, like Samson himself, still blind to what is to come, and they go on to sing of patience as the final crown of saints.

The coming of the officer creates a problem. Samson's refusal, at first, to do his bidding illustrates his uncompromising allegiance to the God of his fathers and his contempt of personal safety. The Chorus suggests the easier way of yielding, pointing out the fact that he has already served the Philistines (with the old implication that he cannot regard himself as a being set apart). Their reasoning is met with a clear distinction between compromise in things indifferent and the surrender of a point of conscience. Then, as if in answer to this final proof of Samson's single devotedness to God's service, comes again the inner prompting, "disposing to something extraordinary my thoughts." He obeys it unhesitatingly and goes forth under divine guidance as of old. Manoa, meanwhile, is busy with misguided plans for his son's release, the moment of his success ironically coinciding with that of Samson's death. The news of Samson's last destructive act is received by his friends with grief and horror, turning to satisfaction in the fact that Samson died

With God not parted from him, as was feared,
But favoring and assisting to the end,

and to exultation in this manifestation of the Almighty's triumph upon his enemies.

As thus interpreted *Samson Agonistes* fits closely into the scheme of Milton's major works. It is—in a different sense to be sure from *Paradise Regained* but hardly less significantly—a counterpart of *Paradise Lost*. Lines 1059–62 of the Ninth Book of the latter poem show that Milton was conscious of an analogy between the sin of Adam and that of Samson. The last phase of the Hebrew champion's career provides a concrete illustration of the power of a free but erring will to face its sin, maintain itself in obedience, and be restored to grace. The drama, like the epics, is an assertion of eternal Providence and a justification of the ways of God to man.

Artistically the poem needs no paraphernalia of critical or biographical interpretation to insure its effect. Its monumental dignity, its consummate expression of the anguish of the human spirit, its extraordinary subtlety of metrical and rhetorical effect—these in themselves are sufficient to make it for many readers the most impressive of Milton's works. Yet it gains from association with our picture of Milton himself in the last days of his heroic life, blind and alone amid the alien society of the Restoration, confronted with the apparent failure of the cause for which he had battled, but seeking in religious faith the assurance that God

> will not long defer
> To vindicate the glory of his name
> Against all competition, nor will long
> Endure it, doubtful whether God be Lord
> Or Dagon.

The analogy between his own position and that of his protagonist must have been vividly present to his mind, and into the representation of Samson he has undoubtedly put more of himself than into any other of his imaginative creations. The sense of power and dignity, the "plain heroic magnitude of mind," the will toward championship —are Milton. So, too, is the consciousness of deprivation in the loss of sight ("The sun to me is dark and silent as the moon"), and the sense of physical helplessness ("In power of others, never in my own"). In many passages the personal note is far too clear to be mistaken. Thus, in the great lament of Samson, beginning with line 608, the phrases, "Unjust tribunals under change of times," "Their carcasses to dogs and fowls a prey," are certainly echoes of the Restoration, with its brutal trials of men like Sir Harry Vane and the indignities to which the bodies of Cromwell and Ireton were subjected. The parallel and not less wretched fate of poverty and disease is Milton's own. He goes so far as almost to specify the rheumatic ills from which he suffered—"painful diseases and deformed"—with the bitter reflection that the afflictions, justly the fruit of dissipation, may come also to those who, like himself, have lived in temperance. We must beware, however, of making the identification of Samson and Milton too complete. Unlike his hero Milton himself was conscious of no fault, and even where Samson's expressions of suffering are appropriate enough in their application to his own case, we must remember that all is heightened and idealized for purposes of art. The tragic gloom and flat despair of Samson, the wretchedness of pain, the distaste of life are the embodiments of an aesthetic mood which owes as much to literature as it does

to personal experience. Milton doubtless realized in himself the baleful force of such emotions, but he had against them the sure guidance of religious faith and the consoling power of poetry. The very expression of them, under the shield of dramatic objectivity, must have been a kind of deliverance from sorrow, a means of securing for himself the serenity of soul which, in spite of all, he evidently possessed throughout his later days.

CHAPTER VI

MILTON'S STYLE AND VERSIFICATION

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO "PARADISE LOST"

MILTON, of all English writers, is the greatest innovator in the matter of expression. It is not merely that his style is individual as that of Shelley or Wordsworth or Browning is individual. It is, in effect, a new and unique medium forged out of various materials and marked by bold departures from the English literary usage of his own or any time. The most interesting features of Miltonic expression are those that are most clearly the result of the individual temper and the peculiar mental habit of its author; those, also, which serve most definitely to suggest his predilections and affinities.

We may note first that his style, despite his employment of a verse form identical with the Elizabethan dramatists, stands at an opposite pole from that of Shakespeare and his colleagues. Milton's language, unlike theirs, has little relish of the speech of men. Where their anomalies are colloquial and idiomatic, his are the product of a preference for the unusual and recondite in vocabulary and construction, which leads him to archaism on the one hand, and to the substitution of foreign idiom, particularly Latin, for native on the other. Sometimes not even classical or earlier English example can be alleged. Milton is simply carving for himself, remoulding and creating with

fine disregard for precedent. In general, Milton's style may be described as almost uniquely literary and intellectual. Freighted with learned and bookish phrase, elaborate in construction, and alien in vocabulary, it achieves a uniform effect of dignity and aloofness and becomes a perfect medium for the restrained and elevated yet intensely passionate personality of its author.

When we come to consider specific characteristics of Miltonic English, we are confronted with a large and difficult task. The nearest approach to systematic treatment is that of David Masson in the third volume of his edition of the *Poetical Works*. The detail of this is too elaborate for presentation here, and much of it is simply a statement of peculiarities of sixteenth and seventeenth century usage in general. Professor Havens [1] has given a simpler classification of the characteristics of Miltonic style which were thought in the eighteenth century to distinguish it from other poetry and which the poets of the period felt obliged to reproduce when they wrote blank verse. Though not pretending to completeness or scientific accuracy, this list is a very serviceable statement of the obvious differentia of Milton's poetic speech in his blank verse poems. It includes, besides the vaguer items of dignity, stateliness, the "organ tone," the following concrete characteristics:[2]

1. Inversion of the natural order of words and phrases;

> Them thus employ'd beheld
> With pity Heaven's high King. . . .
> *P. L.* V, 219–20.

[1] *The Influence of Milton*, pp. 80–88.

[2] I have slightly modified some of Havens's statements and have retained in each case only one or two of his many illustrations.

and especially the placing of a word between two others which depend upon it or on which it depends, e. g., (noun between adjectives), "temperate vapours bland"; (verb between nouns), "Firm peace recovered soon and wonted calm."

2. The omission of words not necessary to the sense:

> . . . extended wide
> In circuit, undetermined square or round.
> *P. L.* II, 1047–48.

3. Parenthesis and apposition:

> Of Abbana and Pharphar, lucid streams.
> *P. L.* I, 469.
>
> Their song was partial, but the harmony
> (What could it less when spirits immortal sing?)
> Suspended Hell. . . .
> *P. L.* II, 552–4.

4. The use of one part of speech for another: e. g. (verb form as noun) "the great consult began"; (adjective form as adverb or as noun) "grinned horrible"; "the palpable obscure"; "dark with excessive bright."

5. Archaisms and Latinisms in vocabulary: e. g., "frore," "areed," "wons," "emprise," "nocent," "congratulant," "attrite."

6. Fondness for collocations of more or less exotic proper names:

> Of Cambalu, seat of Cathaian Can,
> And Samarchand by Oxus, Temir's throne,
> To Paquin of Sinaean kings, and thence
> To Agra and Lahor of great Mogul. . . .
> *P. L.* XI, 388–91.

7. Unusual compound epithets analogous to those in Homer: e. g., "night-warbling bird," "three-bolted thunder," "Heaven-banished host," "double-founted streams."

There is perhaps no practice here of which abundant examples could not be found in English literature before Milton. The unique thing is the degree to which they become in him habitual features of style—the warp and woof of his poetical expression. Spenser, of course, uses archaisms much more persistently than Milton, with whom the practice is in part at least a survival of the Spenserian tradition in poetry. Marlowe affords the closest English precedent for the magniloquent employment of proper nouns and adjectives, and Milton is indebted to him for this device, though the classics, particularly Aeschylus's *Prometheus,* are also influential. The use of Latinisms and "ink-horn" terms in general had been a feature of English expression since the beginnings of humanism, and was at its height in the early seventeenth century. It was, however, most common in formal prose and was on the whole avoided by the poets. John Donne, to be sure, makes free use of the terminology of scholastic philosophy, but neither he nor any other English poet before Milton habitually resorts to a highly Latinized diction and sentence structure as a means of removing his speech from the sphere of daily life to the lofty and sonorous realms of epic.

One feature of Miltonic style, briefly indicated by Havens under the head of "inversion," has received fuller treatment by a German scholar, Gustav Hübener, in his monograph, *Die Stilistische Spannung in Paradise Lost.* Suspension as a trait of style is differentiated from simple suspension as a matter of syntax through its greater arti-

ficiality and elaborateness. It is not native to English speech and does not occur in English poetry before the Renaissance, except sporadically and in initial sentences. Nor is it especially characteristic of Spenser. We find it first freely used in Surrey's translation of the *Aeneid*, where it reproduces the periodic structure of the Latin sentence, and it reaches its height in Milton's immediate predecessors of the early seventeenth century—Davies, Donne, the Fletchers, Cowley. It is to their influence, reinforced by Milton's general penchant toward the classical style in which it originates, that the elaborate periodicity of his construction may be ascribed. Hübener finds less of it in the early poems, but a remarkably Latinized sentence from *Comus* may be cited as an example:

> Bacchus, that first from out the purple grape
> Crush'd the sweet poison of misused wine,
> After the Tuscan mariners transformed,
> Coasting the Tyrrhene shore, as the winds listed,
> On Circe's island fell.
>
> *Comus*, 46–50.

Here the suspension is accomplished by the insertion between subject and predicate of several subordinate elements which retard the completion of the sense. The first clause itself is suspended by the inversion of the verb "crush'd" and the adverbial phrase "from out the purple grape." Finally the sentence includes two bits of Latin idiom which do not contribute to the suspension, viz., "that first," with "first" probably felt as an adjective (Latin, *qui primus*), and the un-English construction "after the Tuscan mariners transformed" (Latin, *post nautas mutatos*).

In *Paradise Lost* such suspensions recur at frequent intervals. The opening sentence,

> Of Man's first disobedience and the fruit
> Of that forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste
> Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
> With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
> Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
> Sing, Heavenly Muse . . .

departs from a natural order which is especially firmly fixed in imperative sentences by beginning with the genitive object and inserting between it and the predicate a relative clause with various dependent elements. Hübener finds twenty-three elaborate suspensions of one sort or another in the first book, never occurring in succession but alternating with unsuspended passages. The suspensions mark moments of emphatic meaning in the steady flow of the epic narrative, as, for example, the opening of Satan's address to Beëlzebub:

> If thou beest he—but Oh! how fall'n, how changed
> From him, who in the happy realms of light,
> Clothed with transcendent brightness, didst outshine
> Myriads, though bright! if he whom mutual league,
> United thoughts and counsels, equal hope
> And hazard in the glorious enterprise,
> Join'd with me once, now misery hath join'd
> In equal ruin.
>
> *P. L.* I, 84–92.

The structural feature thus described contributes more, perhaps, than any other single element to the elevation of Milton's style.

Another essential quality of Miltonic style is its allusive-

ness. This allusiveness, in so far as it consists of a rich suggestion of matters of observation in the realm of nature and human experience, is a trait which Milton shares with many poets. In the degree, however, to which his vision is colored by the experience of other men and simple observation modified by knowledge, he is almost unique. The whole treasury of poetry and the whole storehouse of learning is at his command. He assumes that it is also at the command of his reader and accordingly he loads every rift of his verse with the ore of myth and legend, historical, literary, and scientific fact. Of no other English style is erudition so integral a part. Classical and Biblical allusion is, of course, the most abundant, constituting a kind of current coin of expression wherewith to convey a meaning rich in poetic and cultural suggestion.

But Milton writes not only as a literary connoisseur but also as a scholar, appealing in his readers to a love of ordered learning like his own. Even the echoes of ancient phrase should often be considered, not as mere borrowings, conscious or unconscious, but as allusions intended to carry with them, when recognized, the connotation of their original setting. The comprehensiveness and precision of his references and the pains he is often at to introduce some piece of essential information not really relevant to the simple purpose of expression is an aspect of his general didacticism. The extraordinary thing is the way in which this object is accomplished without loss of poetic quality. The secret seems to be the degree to which the materials of learning have become associated with sensuous imagery and with moving poetical ideas. Milton is erudite, but all erudition is not for him of

equal value. Winnowed, humanized, and touched with the fire of imagination, his studies have passed into vital experience and afford him as natural a body of poetical data as birds and flowers.

The scholarly habit of mind, seeking order and comprehensiveness even in the heat of poetical inspiration, is well illustrated by such a passage as the comparison of the Satanic host to various military assemblages of epic legend at the close of Book I of *Paradise Lost:*

> . . . for never, since created Man,
> Met such embodied force as, named with these,
> Could merit more than that small infantry
> Warr'd on by cranes: though all the giant brood
> Of Phlegra with the heroic race were join'd
> That fought at Thebes and Ilium, on each side
> Mix'd with auxiliar gods; and what resounds
> In fable or romance of Uther's son,
> Begirt with British or Armoric knights;
> And all who since, baptized or infidel,
> Jousted in Aspramont, or Montalban,
> Damasco, or Marocco, or Trebisond;
> Or whom Biserta sent from Afric shore
> When Charlemain with all his peerage fell
> By Fontarabbia.

The passage is a miniature survey, chronologically arranged, of the great conflicts of heroic legend; a survey, indeed, of the materials of the epic poetry of the past: the wars of the gods and giants (Hesiod); the sieges of Troy and Thebes (Homer, Statius); the battles of Arthur (Geoffrey of Monmouth, etc.); the Crusades and the wars of Charlemagne (Italian chivalric epic). Such comprehensiveness goes beyond the requirements of mere

illustration. So, too, does the accurate classification of the two divisions of Celtic chivalry in the phrase, "Begirt with British and Armoric knights."

A more elaborate illustration of ripe humanistic scholarship distilled to an essence and put to the service of poetry is to be found in the descriptive analysis of the culture of ancient Athens offered by Satan as a bait to Christ in *Paradise Regained* (Book IV, lines 236 ff.). An outline of it would read like the program of a set of lectures on Greek civilization: the physical environment; lyric poetry, Ionian and Doric; Homer and the tragedians; oratory; the schools of philosophy, proceeding from the fountain head of Socrates—Academics old and new, Peripatetics, Epicureans, Stoics. Everything is compact, orderly, accurate; the essential points and distinctions are indicated with scholarly precision, yet the whole passage, vibrating as it is with Milton's intense enthusiasm for classic culture, is unquestionably poetry. Its phrases—"wielded at will that fierce democraty," "from Heaven descended to the low-roofed house of Socrates"—are as concrete in imagery as they are pregnant with suggestion. No other poet has written in precisely this way.

A striking feature of Milton's style in *Paradise Lost* is his use of the epic or expanded simile. He follows in this the model of Homer,[3] Virgil, Spenser, Tasso, etc., and even borrows in some cases similes already employed by these epic predecessors. Where he is original the materials of his comparison are sometimes based on simple

[3] Mahaffy says that Milton's learned similes have the *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius rather than Homer as their model. *What have the Greeks Done?*, p. 43.

observation of nature, but oftener on myth and legend, history, travel, science, or the technical arts. These digressions are for him a welcome means of pouring forth the treasures of his mind. When once he is in the vein he does not stop with a single elaborate comparison, but proceeds from one to another. Thus the multitude of the Satanic host become

> . . . like that Pygmean race
> Beyond the Indian mount; or faery elves,
> Whose midnight revels by a forest side
> Or fountain, some belated peasant sees,
> Or dreams he sees, while overhead the moon
> Sits arbitress and nearer to the Earth
> Wheels her pale course; they, on their mirth and dance
> Intent, with jocund music charm his ear;
> At once with joy and fear his heart rebounds.

The alternative comparisons thus offered are usually from widely separated provinces or literatures, particularly from classical mythology and the Bible. Thus Satan's huge bulk is compared first to the ancient giants overthrown by Zeus, then to the Scriptural Leviathan, who, however, promptly becomes the sea beast mistaken for an island of the books of travel. The key to this habit is again, in part at least, Milton's passion for scholarly completeness. He is at pains, for example, in describing the Garden of Eden to omit a reference to no parallel happy garden which has been made memorable in song or story. The result, however, is not an effect of pedantry, but one of rich and ornate profusion.

It is a curious fact that similes and figurative language generally are not at all evenly distributed in Milton's blank

verse poems or even in *Paradise Lost* itself. In Books I and II they are scattered thick as stars. Thereafter they fall off in number, and there are long stretches of the poem, as, for example, the theological discussion in Book III and the dialogue between Adam and Raphael in Book VIII, in which there are none. A recent calculation [4] of the proportion of similes in each book gives the following approximate results: Book I, one simile to 50 lines; Book II, one to 95; Book III, one to 370; Book IV, one to 140; Book V, one to 300; Book VI, one to 300; Book VII, one to 320; Book VIII, none; Book IX, one to 230; Book X, one to 200; Book XI, one to 900; Book XII, one to 300. Even these statistics do not serve to indicate the unevenness of distribution, since the similes are often concentrated in comparatively brief passages. A somewhat similar situation will be found to obtain with regard to metaphor, personification, and other ornamental devices.

These phenomena may serve to direct our attention to the fact that Milton really has two styles, corresponding to two different kinds of object or two qualities of poetic inspiration. The one is abundant, highly colored, pictorial, figurative; the other direct, closely woven, and relatively plain. The first is the language of Milton's impassioned visual imagination, the second, of his ethical and intellectual intensity. Many passages, to be sure, show the two measures in combination, and both have the fundamental Miltonic qualities already analyzed. The contrast between them in their purity is, nevertheless, strongly marked. It may already be discerned in *Comus,* but it is clearest in the later poems. In the sonnets, *Paradise Regained,* and *Samson Agonistes* the barer style pre-

[4] By Miss Edith Murphy in an unpublished paper.

dominates, though there are patches of the other, as in the description of the banquet spread for Christ, or the nightly storm followed by a serene dawn, or the choric description of Samson's descent upon the Philistines like an eagle upon tame villatic fowl. In *Paradise Lost* they are balanced fairly evenly. Hell, Chaos, the Garden, Satan lying on the burning lake or standing like Teneriffe or Atlas, visions of Cherubim gliding to their stations, the brandished sword of God fierce as a comet, passions of demons, the loves of Adam and Eve—these are the objects of a style brilliant with the wealth of Ormus or of Ind. The soberer dialogue in Hell, the correlative council in Heaven, all exposition of doctrine, Satan's or Adam's self-communion, Raphael's final thrilling exhortation, all this is couched in a language relatively plain, but full of lofty dignity and capable of both eloquence and passion. The rich and glowing splendors of Milton's visual imagination are doubtless of a more immediate appeal; the intensity of ethical and human meaning in the other at its best is equally characteristic and perhaps even more enduring.

The discussion has inevitably carried us away from the specific outward features of Milton's literary utterance to the qualities of intellect and emotion which determine them. We may now return to formulate as simply as possible the significant facts regarding his versification. It should be said at the outset that the most complete scientific description of Miltonic prosody carries us but a little way toward an understanding of the total effect produced by his poetry. Rhythm, vocabulary, sentence structure, imagery, all unite in indistinguishable combination to form the majestic garment of Miltonic

thought and feeling. Thus the "blank verse paragraph" so often mentioned in discussions of Milton's poetry is as much a matter of rhetoric as it is of verse. It is because the sense is suspended through line after line, and because Milton takes pains to avoid coincidence of the rhetorical pauses with the line end that we have the continuity of rhythm which is so characteristic a feature of his blank verse.

Even, however, in prosody, strictly considered, Milton is an innovator as well as a master, although in this as in stylistic habit his originality consists in the bolder and more individual employment of practices for which precedent can be found in earlier English poetry. Thus, while the formal description of his varieties of blank verse will correspond in general with a similar description of those of Shakespeare, the examples of variation from this metrical pattern will be at once more numerous and more extreme.[5] The following statement aims at a simple objective classification, avoiding as far as possible controversial questions of metrical theory.

TYPE OR PATTERN LINES. The standard of Milton's verse in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* (except the choruses) may be taken as the line of ten syllables and five accents in rising rhythm (i. e., iambic pentameter unrhymed). Clear examples are:

> Torments him. Round he throws his baleful eyes.
> *P. L.* I, 56.

[5] This is a mere impression and awaits statistical investigation. Routh's calculations, *English Iambic Meter,* tending to show that all English blank verse, including Milton's, runs about alike in the proportion of variation in the strict iambic pattern, are rendered unreliable by his eccentric reading of the lines which he chooses as examples.

United thought and counsels, equal hope.
P. L. I, 88.

As a matter of fact lines with such even and regular coincidence of verse and prose accent are comparatively rare—rarer in Milton's verse than in most English iambic pentameter. Yet probably a majority of lines even with him approximate it so closely that we are unconscious of a variation. Thus in the line,

Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste,
P. L. I, 2.

most readers would emphasize the second syllable only slightly less than the succeeding ones which bear the metrical accent, and in the line,

The force of those dire arms? Yet not for these,
P. L. I, 92.

though the word "dire" is nearly equivalent in weight to "arms" it does not disturb in any marked way the regularity of beat. The tendency of readers simple-minded rhythmically is to carry this regularity through all the lines unless it is challenged by a very conspicuous alteration. To say this, however, is simply to say that there is a a metrical pattern felt throughout all the modifications demanded by rhetorical phrasing.

VARIATIONS IN NUMBER OF SYLLABLES. As compared with the eighteenth century writers of the couplet Milton is very free in the admission of syllables above the standard ten. There is, as in most pentameter verse, a considerable number, though not so many as in Shakespeare's later

plays, of lines of one or rarely two extra unaccented syllables at the end (weak or feminine ending):

And high disdain from sense of injured merit.
P. L. I, 98.

That durst dislike his reign and me preferring.
P. L. I, 102.

For solitude sometimes is best society.
P. L. IX, 249.

Extra syllables may also be introduced at any point in the line. This liberty is freely used in Shakespeare's and, indeed, in all English blank verse. Milton, however, influenced no doubt, by classical and Italian practice, apparently admitted extra-metrical syllables within the line only when they could be brought under certain rules of elision and contraction. These rules (omitting the elisions and contractions of common speech) were formulated by Robert Bridges in his work on *Milton's Prosody* under the following heads:[6]

1. Open vowels; e. g.,

Above the *A*onian mount, while it pursues.
P. L. I, 15.

Strange horror seize th*ee, a*nd pangs unfelt before.
P. L. II, 703.

2. Vowels separated by the liquids l, n, r.

As one who long in pop*ul*ous city pent.
P. L. IX, 445.

[6] For detailed application of the rules and the discussion of apparent or actual exceptions the reader is referred to the latest edition of Mr. Bridges' work, *Milton' Prosody,* Oxford, 1921. My summary, however, is from the simpler statement in the edition of 1894.

His temple right against the temp*le of* God.
P. L. I, 402.

A pill*ar of* state. Deep on his front engraven.
P. L. II, 302.

3. Final *en;* e. g., fall'n, ris'n, driv'n, etc.

4. The second person singular of verbs, e. g.; remembrest, thinkst, etc.

The rules of contraction (3 and 4) may be understood to indicate an actual suppression of the contracted syllable in pronunciation, as is clearly indicated by Milton's careful spelling in the first edition. (He prints "Heav'n, "thinkst," etc., as given above.) Not so, however, the elisions. There might be some doubt in the case of "the" before a word beginning with a vowel, where Milton actually prints "th' "[7] but a suppression of the vowel sound in "thee" in

Strange horror seize *thee,* and pangs unfelt before,

is unthinkable. Mr. Bridges, therefore, concludes that Milton scanned his verse one way (syllabically) and read it another. Yet Milton's elisions are not without practical consequence in the aesthetic consciousness of the modern reader. "We may say generally," says Mr. Bridges, "that Milton's system in *Paradise Lost* was an attempt to keep blank verse decasyllabic by means of fictions, or . . . it may be said that he formulated the conditions most common to those syllables which were oftenest and best used for trisyllabic places; and then worked within the lines

[7] For a discussion of the peculiarities of Milton's spelling, which are often of importance as indications of his reading of his lines, see the introduction to Beeching's edition.

thus drawn." [8] Whatever the aesthetic validity or significance of his practice, the facts are interesting as an illustration of the artistic discipline which coexisted in his work with artistic freedom.

In *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* Milton admits extra syllables on a somewhat freer basis, not, however, to the extent to which they are admitted in the early poems or in English pentameter verse generally.

VARIATION IN THE PLACING OF ACCENT (INVERSION OF RHYTHM). The iambic succession of unaccented-accented syllables is freely varied; very commonly at the beginning of the line:

> Róse out of Chaos; or if Sion's hill
> *P. L.* I, 10.

This is the easiest and most normal variation of the iambic pattern and is common even with the couplet versifiers of the eighteenth century.

Similar reversal after a rhetorical or metrical pause is almost as little disturbing to the regularity of the rhythm:

> Illumine, what is low, raíse and support.
> *P. L.* I, 23.

Elsewhere such alteration of accent is more strongly felt. Examples of Milton's daring and success are:

> Of Mán's fírst disobedience and the fruit.
> *P. L.* I, 1.

[8] In the 1921 edition, p. 18, Bridges sums up the matter thus: "As a matter, then, of rhythm it may well enough be said that Milton's elisions are trisyllabic feet; but historically and in prosody they are 'elisions,' the great-grandchildren of Homeric elision."

Which, tasted, works knówledge of good and evil.
P. L. VII, 543.

Beyond all past examples and fúture.
P. L. X, 840.

Which of us who beholds the bright súrface
P. L. VI, 472.

The last two instances, with inversion in the final foot, are very unusual, and some misguided editors would accent the words "futúre" and surfáce" to escape it.

VARIATIONS IN NUMBER OF ACCENTS. The changes which I have just indicated, even the most difficult of them, still leave us with lines that are capable of easy scansion as pentameter verse, allowing for the principle of substitution but without doing violence to the prose accent of the words. There are, however, many cases in which it is impossible to recognize the normal number of beats in any intelligent reading of the line. Apparent instances of three-beat lines are:

Immútable, immórtal, ínfinite.
Of háppiness and fínal mísery.

Four-beat lines are more common:

As from the céntre thríce to the útmost póle.
Served ónly to discóver sights of wóe.
No líght but ráther dárkness vísible.

Lines having more than four actual accents give an effect of marked retardation to the verse:

Light ármed, or héavy, shárp, smóoth, swift or slow.
P. L. II, 902.

Rócks, cáves, lákes, féns, bógs, déns, and shádes
of déath. *P. L.* II, 621.

The last is an extreme case. Of course we may say that the missing beats in the three and four stress lines, though unheard by the sensual ear, are present in the mind, and that the six, seven, or eight beats in the others are subconsciously reduced to five.[9] The number of stresses actually heard in a given line will, as I have said, vary with the individual interpretation. But one would defy even the most sing-song reader to get more than four in either of the following:

> To the garden of bliss, thy seat prepared.
> *P. L.* VIII, 299.
> In the visions of God. It was a hill.
> *P. L.* XI, 377.

THE CÆSURA OR BREAK IN THE VERSE. The normal pentameter line tends to divide itself into two balancing parts, but all poets, even the regular versifiers of the eighteenth century, vary the position of the break to avoid monotony. Milton does so more freely than others. Bridges shows that the metrical pause in Milton, as determined by a grammatical pause, may come at any point within the line. Extreme instances are:

> Thus with the year
> Seasons return, but not to me returns
> Day, || or the sweet approach of ev'n or morn.
> (1 + 9)
> And bush with frizzl'd hair implicit: || last
> Rose as in dance the stately trees.
> (9 + 1)

[9] Bridges rather arbitrarily refuses to recognize more than five stresses in a line. 1921 ed., p. 40.

There are sometimes two breaks in a line, the "variety and severity" of the breaks being, according to Bridges, a distinction of Milton's verse.

Hail Son of God, || Saviour of men, || thy name.
(4 + 4 + 2)
Regions of sorrow, || dolefull shades, || where peace.
(5 + 3 + 2)

Such are the more obvious and tangible facts of Miltonic prosody in *Paradise Lost,* and they are, as we have seen, enough in themselves to mark him as individual in his metrical practice. The more complex factors of rhythm—quantity, pitch, modulation of vowel and consonant sound, the lesser degrees of rhetorical pause both within the line and at its end—are impossible to tabulate or measure. All one can say is that Milton's artistry in their use is such as to make him the supreme master of the harmonies of English verse.

CHAPTER VII

MILTON'S FAME AND INFLUENCE

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

THOUGH Milton lived his last days in quietness and published his great poems with no accompaniment of public demonstration, he had at his death already taken his place among the notables of England. As a man of learning, as a Latin and English poet, as the writer of the *Defense against Salmasius,* and as a last survivor of the Commonwealth government, he was naturally an object of public interest, and, to royalists, of scandal. He was visited in his London obscurity by distinguished foreigners. John Dryden asked his leave to turn *Paradise Lost* into an opera, and conversed with him on literary matters, receiving the scornful answer, "Yes, Mr. Dryden, you may tag my verses." Numerous biographies were written and published in the first quarter century after his death.

Though Milton would have acquired no such prompt notoriety on the strength of his English poetry alone, and though the taste and temper of the Restoration were all against a proper understanding of his work, there is evidence that *Paradise Lost* was both read and admired from the first, not alone by the few men of Milton's own circle who, like Andrew Marvell, shared his moral and political

ideas, but even occasionally by the wits of the new age.[1] Professor Havens estimates that some four thousand copies of *Paradise Lost* were in circulation by 1680, enough to supply the "fit audience though few" whom Milton thought he had a right to expect in any age. The leader in critical admiration and the true founder of Milton's literary reputation was John Dryden, who returned to his work again and again in his prose discussions. The idea of Milton's unpopularity in the Restoration period was greatly exaggerated by eighteenth century writers, in contrast to the universal admiration of their own age.[2]

It remains true, however, that the changes in the moral tone of the nation which attended the Revolution of 1688 made possible a rapid widening of the circle of Milton's admirers. Jacob Tonson, into whose hands the copyright of *Paradise Lost* had fallen, published five successive editions of the poem in the decade from 1688 to 1698, one of them (that of 1695) with elaborate learned annotations by Patrick Hume. This is the first really scholarly edition of Milton or, indeed, of any English poet. Latin translations were made of *Paradise Lost* and other Miltonic poems. Even the prose works began to be read again with sympathy as the anti-Puritan reaction came to an end and the Stuart régime was finally overthrown.

[1] Richardson has an account of Sir John Denham's enthusiasm for *Paradise Lost,* "wet from the press." He sent it to Dryden, who remarked "This man cuts us all out and the ancients too." On the authenticity of the anecdote see Banks, *Sir John Denham and "Paradise Lost."*

[2] See Havens, *Seventeenth Century Notices of Milton,* also Good's *Studies in the Milton Tradition* to which I am greatly indebted for data regarding the early editions, biographies, and critiques of Milton.

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The record of Milton's fame and influence in the eighteenth century is an integral part of the literary and intellectual history of the age. In no other time has he had so many readers or been the occasion of so much discussion. The frequency of editions increases by leaps and bounds, and the chorus of praise from poets and critics gains continuously in volume. That there were also those who, either on political or literary grounds, took a hostile view, is additional proof that Milton in these years was a force to reckon with. The special reasons for this interest are various. On the one hand, there was the fact that Milton was an imitator, however liberal, of the admired ancients. The classical form of *Paradise Lost* invited comparison with Homer and Virgil, and such comparisons were continually made. Furthermore, Milton's Puritanism commended itself to an age which had reacted against the spirit of license in Restoration literature; and his general didacticism, far from being felt as a defect, was in entire accord with dominant literary practice. But his appeal was felt, also, and in the end primarily, on the ground of the sublimity and fervor of his poetic imagination. It was here that he fell in with the underlying current of romanticism which was unsatisfied by the rationalizing poetry of the school of Pope; and as this tendency asserted itself more powerfully, Milton became more and more acclaimed as a champion of the inwardness and freedom of true poetry. Finally, Milton's style and versification were fascinating by their very contrast with prevailing literary modes. He

was a quarry of poetical phrase for everybody, even for Pope, and a direct model for the vast school of blank versifiers who maintained what might be called the other poetical tradition of the eighteenth century. Taken as a whole, the Miltonism of the eighteenth century is an extraordinarily varied and complex phenomenon. I shall here attempt to set forth only a few of its outstanding phases.

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY ESTIMATE OF MILTON. Critical admiration of Milton was somewhat tempered in the early period by the judgment that his poems failed to conform to the neo-classical rules of poetry. Dryden, in spite of his sense of Milton's greatness, was forced to admit that *Paradise Lost* was no "true epic," and this was a common verdict. The tendency, however, of Milton devotees among the classicists was naturally to frame a defense which would justify him according to the accepted standards of their school. It was in this spirit that Addison wrote his famous series of papers on Milton in the *Spectator*. Both he and Steele had previously, by casual notices and quotations, commended Milton to public notice. In the critique Addison, besides exhibiting its individual beauties, analyzes *Paradise Lost* according to the ancient theory and dares to compare it on equal terms with the deified works of Homer and Virgil. The effects of this praise from the most respected critic of the time was to enhance the reputation of Milton in all quarters. It has even been said that Addison's essays created the vogue of *Paradise Lost,* though this appears to be not altogether true. Certainly, however, the papers became at once the standard piece of Milton criticism. They were published separately in 1719 and have been reis-

sued and reread down to the present day. Translated into French (1729), German (1740), and Italian (1742), they became, along with an essay by Voltaire, the means of introducing Milton's English works for the first time to a continental audience.[3]

Of course Addison did not claim that Milton's poem was wholly regular; and in one paper he points out its defects, employing the same rules of judgment that he had used in praising him. Thus Milton's "fable" is defective, being that of tragedy rather than of epic. Some of his incidents have not "probability enough for an epic poem." His digressions and his allusions to heathen fables in a Christian poem "sin against the canon of unity." To other critics even these reservations were unacceptable. They said that Milton was not to be tried by the neoclassical code. He had invented a new type of poem, the divine epic, superior to anything in antiquity. If he was irregular they would exult in his irregularity. "The fine arts," said Thomas Leland (1764), "have no rules but genius to direct them."

This attitude falls in with the increasing tendency to exalt imagination and emotion in poetry above the "correctness" which had been the ideal of the school of Pope. Thus Joseph Warton, in his *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope* (1756), places Milton, because of his sublimity and passion, in the first rank of poets with Shakespeare and Spenser and far above the accepted writers of his own day. As the romantic currents of the eighteenth century became stronger, the feeling that Milton represented the true ideal from which poetry

[3] For the continental fame of Milton see the studies by Telleen, Robertson, Pizzo.

had since declined became increasingly dominant. The new interest in nature, the taste for color and romance, political liberalism, developing humanitarian sentiment, and finally the movement toward a greater earnestness and spirituality in religion were all favorable to a more generous appreciation of Milton's essential qualities.

The most interesting evidences of this are to be found in the warmth and insight which pervade the poetical tributes to his genius scattered thick through the literature of the period. The modern feeling of admiration for Milton's heroic personality and of astonishment at the boldness and sublimity of his imagination finds expression much earlier and more completely in verse than it does in prose. The list of fully sympathetic poetical utterances about Milton is headed by Andrew Marvell's verses prefixed to the 1674 edition of *Paradise Lost*. His praise, though tinged with religious sobriety, sets the style for the more extravagance utterances of later times.

> That majesty which through thy work doth reign
> Draws the devout, deterring the profane;
> And things divine thou treat'st of in such state
> As them preserves, and thee, inviolate.
> At once delight and horror on us seize,
> Thou sing'st with so much gravity and ease,
> And above human flight dost soar aloft,
> With plumes so strong, so equal, and so soft;
> A bird named from that paradise you sing
> So never flags, but always keeps on wing.

Dryden's famous epigram, already referred to, placed under Milton's portrait in the folio of 1688, goes much further than its author was willing to do in the cooler and more critical elements of prose:

Three poets, in three distant ages born,
Greece, Italy, and England did adorn.
The first in loftiness of thought surpassed;
The next in majesty: in thought the last.
The force of nature could no further go;
To make a third, she joined the other two.

Pope, Addison, and many others expressed their admiration in verse with similar absence of reservation. Milton's blindness is often mentioned in these tributes, especially by those men who inclined to make poetic inspiration a quality of the soul, and his own claim to a compensatory inward vision accepted and elaborated. It remained for Thomas Gray[4] to express this more romantic feeling of his time in language worthy of the theme:

Nor second he that rode sublime
Upon the seraph-wings of extasy,
The secrets of the abyss to spy.
He passed the flaming bounds of Place and Time:
The living throne, the sapphire-blaze,
Where angels tremble when they gaze,
He saw; but blasted with excess of light,
Clos'd his eyes in endless night.

This widening conception is an index of the acceptance of the whole of Milton. His appeal, originally felt almost exclusively in *Paradise Lost,* came gradually to embrace his other works as well; and the minor poems, as we shall see, became a part of his direct influence on the history of poetry itself.[5] An odd development of Mil-

[4] In *The Progress of Poesy.*

[5] The minor poems were not entirely neglected before 1740. See Sherburn, *The Early Popularity of Milton's Minor Poems.*

tonic enthusiasm of the later eighteenth century was the continuous popularity of *Comus* in adapted versions on the stage.[6]

The general trend met something of opposition in the most important single pronouncement on Milton after Addison's critique, namely, that contained in the celebrated biography by Samuel Johnson in the *Lives of the Poets* (1779). Johnson joined the general chorus in praise of *Paradise Lost,* "a poem which, considered with respect to design, may claim the first place, and with respect to performance, the second, among the productions of the human mind." On the whole, however, his treatment of Milton is reactionary. Milton's politics Johnson loathed, and he disparaged his personal character at every point. He was evidently annoyed, also, by the admiration of his contemporaries for the minor poems, and he denied all merit whatever to *Lycidas* and the Sonnets. His churlishness provoked a storm of reply from those who accepted Milton's liberalism as completely as they did his art. Cowper expressed the desire to thrash the old Tory till his pension should jingle in his pocket.

One phase of eighteenth century critical discussion of Milton concerned his versification. The issue as to the respective merits of blank verse and rhyme was one of long standing. Milton himself in the foreword to *Paradise Lost,* had thrown out a challenge against the prevailing practice of the Restoration poets. But rhyme and regularity had already triumphed, and it was part of the work of eighteenth century Milton critics to justify his verse on

[6] Thaler, *Milton in the Theater,* records public performances in practically every year from 1738 to 1800. The University of Michigan Library contains nineteen separate editions of either the Dalton or Coleman revisions.

aesthetic grounds. The defense of his subtler harmonies, and of the technique by which they were secured, was timid at first, but finally emphatic enough. An outstanding pronouncement in favor of the Miltonic freedom against the tyranny of the couplet was that of Edward Young in his *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759). Young declared that Pope's rhyming of Homer had "put Achilles in petticoats a second time." "How much nobler had it been," he continues, "if his numbers had rolled on in full flow, through various modulations of masculine melody, into those grandeurs of solemn sound which are indispensably demanded by the native dignity of heroic song. . . . Blank verse is verse unfallen, uncursed; verse reclaimed, reënthroned in the true language of the Gods."

MILTON'S INFLUENCE ON EIGHTEENTH CENTURY POETRY. The general admiration for Milton which was felt by the writers of the neo-classic and of the romantic groups alike resulted in far-reaching influence on eighteenth century poetry. Blank verse was written in large quantities throughout the period, and practically all of it, as Professor Havens has shown,[7] is Miltonic. Except in drama, there was, indeed, no other model. And the Miltonic manner, as distinct from his spirit and inspiration, was not difficult to catch. His use of Latinisms, his inversions of natural word order, his collocations of sonorous proper names, and many other conspicuous external traits furnished a ready means of stylistic ornamentation which an age largely destitute of poetic

[7] *The Influence of Milton on English Poetry.* This learned and important work is my chief source of information regarding the poetic imitation of Milton.

originality was all too ready to adopt. It served to cover the bareness of whole acres of descriptive and didactic poetry; it enabled epic poets to conceal their lack of inspiration from themselves. One of the earliest wearers of the Miltonic garment was John Phillips in the burlesque poem, *The Splendid Shilling* (1701). Such employment of the high phraseology of *Paradise Lost* on trivial themes to secure an effect of the absurd was very popular. But it was not only the minor men or the parodists who submitted themselves to the spell of Milton. Pope himself, though he used only couplets, plundered the general treasury of phrase to good effect, while Thomson, Young, and Cowper, who maintained in blank verse the more solemn and inward tradition of poetry before its culmination in Wordsworth, were much more profoundly influenced.

Thomson was genuinely stirred by the Miltonic sweep and grandeur. His own imaginative and vaguely religious sense of the majesty of nature found support in the work of his greater predecessor. His style was moulded in a remarkable degree out of the Miltonic materials, and sometimes he succeeded in achieving a kindred eloquence. In general, however, the sword of Achilles was far too mighty for him to use successfully and as a result he fell into all manner of extravagance and absurdity. The grandiose expressions, which were natural and fitting in their application to the remote and lofty matters with which Milton dealt, became a grotesque affectation when employed, as they often were by Thomson and others, as a means of elevating the commonplace. *The Seasons* (1726–1730) was the first serious and thoroughgoing attempt to offset the absence of rhyme

by resorting to the ornamentation of Miltonic phrase, and it set the pattern for much subsequent blank verse. It had also an effect in establishing the artificial diction which is the curse of eighteenth century poetry generally. Cowper's superior taste enabled him to avoid the excessive Miltonism of Thomson, but his intimate familiarity with, and profound admiration for, *Paradise Lost* left a strong mark on his own blank verse. "One feature or another of Milton's style and diction," says Havens, "occurs in almost every paragraph of *The Task*."

The discussion of Miltonic imitation has thus far concerned *Paradise Lost* alone. Of his other works only the lyrics, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso,* exerted any considerable influence on eighteenth century poetry, and this influence came late. Lyricism was dead in the first half of the period. Its revival after 1740 among men of romantic inclinations took place in part under the influence of these two exquisite companion pieces. Their combination of freshness and poetic enthusiasm with precision of workmanship and restraint of mood made them, as Havens remarks, particularly adapted to a transition stage between classicism and romanticism. Both Collins and Gray were inspired by them and adopted their personifications, their tone, and, to some extent, their rhythms. A more thoroughgoing imitator was Thomas Warton the younger, whose favorite octosyllabic verse, with its pleasing and mildly romantic descriptions of English rural landscape, reflects the charm of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* and employs their phraseology at every turn. Through these men *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* were made widely popular, and their influence was car-

ried on into the great lyric movement of the early nineteenth century. *Il Penseroso* is sometimes held accountable for the eighteenth century passion for poetic melancholy. This is hardly true, for the work of the "Graveyard School" antedated the vogue of Milton's minor poems, and its lugubriousness is of a different type. The tone of *Il Penseroso* fell in, however, with this sentiment, and devotion to the melancholy Muse is at least in part Miltonic.

MILTON SCHOLARSHIP IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. The Miltonic activity of the eighteenth century was not confined to poetic imitation and to the attempt to establish his rank according to classic or romantic principles of criticism. The work of scholarly interpretation was also vigorously undertaken by a distinguished line of editors and commentators. This activity consisted in: (1) the elaboration of Milton's biography on the basis of earlier records and of the personal material in the prose and poetry; (2) the explanation and illustration of details in the poems; (3) the discovery of sources and analogues for *Paradise Lost* and in less degree for the other poems. These contributions were generally included in one or another of the innumerable editions of Milton's works. They are, of course, closely connected with the critical discussions already mentioned. The learned editorial labors of Patrick Hume in 1695 were followed in 1732 by Richard Bentley's more sensational but less worthy attempt to constitute a critical text of *Paradise Lost* according to the methods which, as a classical scholar, he had been accustomed to apply to ancient authors. Bentley made the unwarranted assump-

tion that Milton's work had been corrupted by an editor who, taking advantage of the poet's blindness, had interpolated passages and made minor changes to the detriment of the meter and the meaning. In his attempt to restore the poem to its original form, Bentley, guided solely by his idea of what Milton ought to have said, exhibits the most extraordinary bad taste and judgment. Of his vast body of emendations but two have been adopted in the received text, while some five or ten additional ones are held by J. W. Mackail to be all but certain.[8]

The two Jonathan Richardsons, father and son, published in 1734 *Explanatory Notes and Remarks on "Paradise Lost,"* including also, as usual, a new life of the poet. The elder Richardson had inherited traditions of the Restoration period and contributed some valuable personal detail regarding Milton. The son, who was a competent classical scholar, contributed useful explanations of the learned allusions. Both were sympathetic and intelligent, and their work became a standard commentary. The first variorum edition of *Paradise Lost* was that of Thomas Newton, published with a new life, the best that had been written up to that time, in 1749. This became the basis of a complete variorum of the poetical works by Henry Todd, published in 1801 and revised in 1809. Todd collects in his preliminary account of Milton's life and in his extensive notes to, and discussions of, the poems, the fruits of the scholarly and critical activities of the whole century and contributes much material of his own. He adduces a host of literary parallels from classical and modern authors, takes account of the valuable materials afforded by the Cam-

[8] *Bentley's Milton.*

bridge Manuscript, prints the records of the nuncupative will proceedings, and deals extensively with Milton's sources and analogues. His work was not superseded until Masson's three-volume edition of the poems in 1890, and it still remains a mine of information for Milton students.

The exploration, often with the implication of plagiarism, of Milton's literary borrowings was a favorite amusement of both eighteenth and nineteenth century scholars. The most sensational incident in this connection was William Lauder's claim in his *Essay on Milton's Imitation of the Moderns* (1749) to have found the originals of *Paradise Lost* in the Latin drama *Adamus Exul* of Hugo Grotius and in other out-of-the-way neo-Latin poems. It was afterwards shown that the remarkable closeness of Lauder's parallels was due to the fact that he had interpolated among them passages from a Latin translation of Milton's poem by William Hog. If Lauder had contented himself with the *Adamus Exul* as he found it, he would have been on solid ground with Hayley,[9] who, following a suggestion of Voltaire, pointed out the similarities between *Paradise Lost* and the *Adamo* of Andreini, and with Dunster, who brought forward Sylvester's *Du Bartas* as a primary formative influence in Milton's style. The plausibility of these relationships and of the later claims in favor of Caedmon and Vondel has been discussed in Chapter IV.

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

There is no evidence of a narrowing of the circle of Milton's readers in the first quarter of the nineteenth

[9] *Life of Milton*, pp. 233 ff.

century. New editions appear in considerable numbers, and literary critics continue to pay tribute to his greatness. The discovery, in 1823, of the manuscript of the Christian Doctrine was an event of national interest. Bishop Sumner was commissioned by the King to publish and translate it;[10] Macaulay's essay, which owed its fame as much to its subject as to its intrinsic brilliancy, was written as a review of it.

It was, however, among the poets who came in the wake of the French Revolution that Milton was the most dynamic force. He was so already in the late eighteenth century to William Blake, in whose image-haunted brain he took his place among the prophets, visiting his waking dreams in person and contributing largely to the materials of his imagination in poetry and art. Over ninety of Blake's paintings and engravings are on Miltonic subjects.[11] His Urizen in the epic poem *Vala* is a wild counterpart of Satan, and Milton himself, standing for the ideal poet, is the titular hero of another work. Blake's own fantastic cosmology and the philosophic ideas embodied in it are somehow indebted, whether by agreement or opposition, to the Miltonic system, but it surpasses the powers of human reason to make clear the relationship between them.[12]

In the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* Blake says that Satan represents desire, and the Messiah, reason or the restrainer. He then goes on to invert Milton's ethical code by proclaiming the Messiah rather than Satan the Evil One, adding in a note that the reason why Milton

[10] He published the text and translation in two volumes in 1825.
[11] Havens, *Milton's Influence*, p. 217.
[12] See Saurat, *Blake and Milton*, 1920, for an attempt to do so.

wrote in fetters when he wrote of angels and God, and at liberty when of devils and Hell, is because he was a true poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it. This Rousseauistic proposition represents something new in Milton interpretation. It is really quite different in its implications from Dryden's statement that Satan is the hero of *Paradise Lost,* for Dryden was thinking in terms of epic technique, while Blake is declaring that passion and rebellion, typified in Satan, are the vital motives of Milton's poetic inspiration. In so doing, he keenly anticipates the trend of a good deal of subsequent criticism. An identical point of view pervades Sir Walter Raleigh's brilliant book on Milton, which may fairly be said to represent the standard opinion of the romantic school. The theological and moral system under which Milton disciplined himself, its validity no longer felt, was thought to be a contradiction to his actual experience. Hence the ideals and aims which he thought he was achieving have been discredited as not representing the real values of his work, with the inference that Milton's poetry can no longer be admired as a whole or on his own terms. Matthew Arnold finds the obsoleteness of Milton's theology a barrier to modern acceptance of *Paradise Lost* and recommends that it be read in fragments. In general, the dramatic portrayal of Satan in Books I and II is held to outrank in creative power all the rest of the poem.

Shelley and Byron, without analyzing the situation as Blake had done, rejected or ignored Milton's Puritanism, while making the most of those elements in him which coincided with their own revolutionary ideas. Thus Shelley found Milton's Satan, as a moral being, infinitely superior to his God, who bore the familiar earmarks of

the tyrant. His own Prometheus he recognized to be a kindred figure, superior, however, because his activities were directed to man's good instead of to his destruction. Byron gave a more direct literary application to the Satan worship of the time by making Lucifer, in the drama of *Cain,* a champion of man's thirst for intellectual emancipation. The new age of spiritual rebellion thus adopted Milton as its ally against his will. Their sympathies led them naturally to exalt his personal career. Thus Shelley ranges him in *Adonais* with the other poet-heroes who have had the world against them.

> . . . He died
> Who was the sire of an immortal strain,
> Blind, old, and lonely, when his country's pride
> The priest, the slave, and the liberticide
> Trampled and mocked with many a loathed rite
> Of lust and blood.

Wordsworth had a juster sense of Milton's true quality and he was profoundly influenced by his spirit and art. His own combination of a temperate love of liberty with an intense moral earnestness were akin to Milton's and predisposed him to admiration. His sonnet, "Milton, thou should'st be living at this hour," illustrates how deeply he had assimilated the ethical idealism of his master. It was, indeed, the reading of Milton's sonnets which inspired his own masterpieces in this form. There is also a Miltonic quality in Wordsworth's more exalted utterances in blank verse, and though he does not, like Thomson, ape Milton's stylistic peculiarities in an obvious manner, echoes of Miltonic phrase are frequent in his work.

Keats, too, was a Miltonist, but on lines quite different

from either Shelley or Wordsworth. His feeling for Milton's poetry was primarily aesthetic. The richness of Milton's expression, "poetical luxury," as Keats called it, was naturally attractive to his temperament, but he learned to admire the restraint and dignity which elevated Milton above his own earlier masters. Keats's enthusiastic study of *Paradise Lost* just after he had written *Endymion* is rightly held to have been of great influence in disciplining and ennobling his later work. His *Hyperion* represents an attempt to compose a blank verse epic on the Miltonic plane. In both conception and style, the poem owes much to *Paradise Lost*. It was abandoned, because Keats felt himself to be doing violence to his own genius in adopting a poetical mode which was, after all, alien to his own. Taken as a whole, the romantic period, though its view of Milton was colored by its own emotions, stood close to him in imaginative sympathy and was better able than the eighteenth century to value his true poetic quality.

The decline which may be traced in the popular vogue of Milton through the later nineteenth century is to be attributed in part to the rise of a modern romantic literature, which rendered him less necessary as a rallying point for poetical enthusiasm, in part to his increasing remoteness in an age no longer thoroughly disciplined in classical knowledge and thought,—an age, also, for which the system of theological ideas on which he built has become largely obsolete. Milton is no longer in the degree he was for over a century after his death a theme of heated controversy. He has become a classic, and as such is abandoned to the limited audience of those who are equipped to read him. For poets, his supreme mastery of the language of the gods, though no longer a thing to imitate,

continues to be an inspiration. Tennyson, Meredith, Swinburne, and others have paid him tribute.

Meanwhile, the scholarly study of his life and work has been carried to a point far beyond that reached by the activity of the eighteenth century. The collected edition of the poetry and prose published by John Mitford in 1851 has remained standard to the present time, while the Bohn edition of the prose, issued in the same year, with its translations of the Latin works, has been an available means of access to these materials. It is, however, upon the monumental biography of David Masson, the first volume of which appeared in 1859[13] and the last in 1894, that modern knowledge of Milton chiefly rests. Masson's indefatigable labors in the records and pamphlets of the Puritan period, and his minute attention to every detail in the remotest degree related to Milton, have made his work, though of oppressive magnitude, the one indispensable body of biographical information. It has remained for later biographers, like Mark Pattison, to construct interpretations of the man and poet, according to their individual insight, out of these materials.

In more recent years the paraphernalia of Milton study has been enriched by dictionaries of his language and allusions and by the fuller and more learned annotation of his poems. There has also been an effort to see him clearly in his intellectual as earlier students had done in his literary and poetical relationships. With the decline of active prejudice against his theology there has come a higher valuation of his original contribution as a humane and philosophical thinker.[14] Connected with this interest

[13] A revision of this volume was published in 1881.

[14] A bibliography of this movement is given by Saurat in his *Milton, Man and Thinker.*

in his ideas there is, particularly on the Continent, an active and somewhat disillusioned discussion of his personality and an attempt to analyze from the modern standpoint the relation between his personal experience and his art.[15] Such a renewal of inquiry, even if it challenges the hero-worship of Macaulay and Masson, is a tribute to Milton's extraordinary power, through successive generations, of remaining a matter of concern to men.

[15] See the long discussion provoked by Liljegren's *Studies* and Mutschmann's fantastic *Milton und das Licht* in *Anglia, Englische Studien, Neophilologus* etc., since 1920.

APPENDIX

MILTON'S "BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA"

OF the various passages in the prose works in which Milton pauses to take the reader into his confidence regarding his own inmost thoughts and aspirations two are outstanding as autographic revelations of his poetical development up to the time when he began to draft the plans of *Paradise Lost*. First to be considered is a statement in the *Apology for Smectymnuus* concerning the development of his ideals of chastity, written in answer to slanderous accusations by Bishop Hall, but constituting an independent record of the successive phases of his emotional life from the beginning of his University career to the close of the Horton period. As a commentary upon his own early poetical work and the literary influences under the stimulus of which it was composed, this document is worth volumes of criticism. Milton has analyzed the stages of his inner life as clearly if not so fully as Wordsworth did his own in *The Prelude*. I give the passage as a whole with an interpretation of its statements in the light of the record of Milton's youthful poetry.[1]

I had my time, readers, as others have, who have good learning bestowed upon them, to be sent to those places where, the opinion was, it might soonest be obtained; and as the

[1] For a fuller analysis see Hanford, *The Youth of Milton*.

manner is, was not unstudied in those authors which are most commended. Whereof some were grave orators and historians, whose matter methought I loved indeed, but as my age then was, so I understood them; others were the smooth elegiac poets, whereof the schools are not scarce, whom both for the pleasing sound of their numerous writing, which in imitation I found most easy, and most agreeable to nature's part in me, and for their matter, which what it is there be few who know not, I was so allured to read, that no recreation came to me better welcome. For that it was then those years with me which are excused, though they be least severe, I may be saved the labour to remember ye. Whence having observed them to account it the chief glory of their wit, in that they were able to judge, to praise, and by that could esteem themselves worthiest to love those high perfections, which under one or other name they took to celebrate; I thought to myself by every instinct and presage of nature, which is not wont to be false, that what emboldened them to this task, might with such diligence as they used embolden me; and that what judgment, wit, or elegance was my share, would herein best appear, and best value itself, by how much more wisely, and with more love of virtue I should choose (let rude ears be absent) the object of not unlike praises. For albeit these thoughts to some will seem virtuous and commendable, to others only pardonable, to a third sort perhaps idle; yet the mentioning of them now will end in serious.

Nor blame it, readers, in those years to propose to themselves such a reward, as the noblest dispositions above other things in this life have sometimes preferred: whereof not to be sensible when good and fair in one person meet, argues both a gross and shallow judgment, and withal an ungentle and swainish breast. For by the firm settling of these persuasions, I became, to my best memory, so much a proficient, that if I found those authors anywhere speaking unworthy

things of themselves or unchaste of those names which before they had extolled, this effect it wrought on me, from that time forward their art I still applauded, but the men I deplored; and above them all preferred the two famous renowners of Beatrice and Laura, who never write but honor of them to whom they devote their verse, displaying sublime and pure thoughts, without transgression. And long it was not after when I was confirmed in this opinion, that he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem; that is a composition and pattern of the best and honorablest things; not presuming to sing praises of heroic men, or famous cities, unless he have in himself the experience and practice of all that which is praiseworthy.

Next (for hear me out now, readers, that I may tell ye whither my younger feet wandered), I betook me to those fables and romances, which recount in solemn cantos the deeds of knighthood founded by our victorious kings, and from hence in renown all over Christendom. There I read it in the oath of every knight that he should defend to the expense of his best blood, if so befell him, the honour and chastity of virgin or matron; from whence even then I learned what a noble virtue chastity must be, to the defence of which so many worthies, by such a dear adventure of themselves, had sworn. And if I found in the story afterward, any of them, by word or deed, breaking that oath, I judged it the same fault of the poet, as that which is attributed to Homer, to have written indecent things of the gods. Only this my mind gave me, that every free and gentle spirit, without that oath, ought to be born a knight, nor needed to expect the gilt spur, or the laying of a sword upon his shoulder to stir him both by his counsel and his arms, to secure and protect the weakness of any attempted chastity. So that even these books, which to many others have been the fuel of wantonness and loose living, I cannot think how,

unless by divine indulgence, proved to me so many incitements, as you have heard, to the love and steadfast observation of that virtue which abhors the society of the bordellos.

Thus from the laureate fraternity of poets, riper years and the ceaseless round of studies led me to the shady spaces of philosophy; but chiefly to the divine volumes of Plato and his equal Xenophon: where if I should tell ye what I learned of chastity and love, I mean of that which is truly so, whose charming cup is only virtue, which she bears in her hand to those who are worthy (the rest are cheated with a thick intoxicating potion, which a certain sorceress, the abuser of love's name carries about) and how the first and chiefest office of love ends in the soul, producing those two happy twins of her divine generation, knowledge and virtue. With such abstracted sublimities as these, it might be worth your listening, readers, as I may one day hope to have ye in a still time, when there shall be no chiding.

Last of all, not in time, but as perfection is last, that care was ever had of me, with my earliest capacity, not to be negligently trained in the precepts of the Christian religion: this that I have hitherto related, hath been to shew, that though Christianity had been but slightly taught me, yet a certain reservedness of natural disposition, and moral discipline, learnt out of the noblest philosophy, was enough to keep me in disdain of far less incontinence than this of the bordello. But having had the doctrine of holy scripture unfolding those chaste and high mysteries, with timeliest care infused, that "the body is for the Lord and the Lord for in body"; thus also I argued to myself, that if unchastity in a woman, whom St. Paul terms the glory of man, be such a scandal and dishonour, then certainly in a man, who is both the image and glory of God, it must, though commonly not so thought, be much more deflowering and dishonourable; in that he sins both against his own body, which is the perfecter sex, and his own glory, which is in the

woman; and, that which is worst, against the image and glory of God, which is in himself. Nor did I slumber over that place expressing such high rewards of ever accompanying the Lamb, with those celestial songs to others inapprehensible, but not to those who were not defiled with women, which doubtless means fornication; for marriage must not be called a defilement.

In the first paragraph Milton indicates with some precision the moment of a new kind of emotional response, characteristic of adolescence, to the stimulus of reading. The smooth and glowing love poetry of Ovid and his fellows has spoken powerfully to his imagination and has roused in him the impulse of imitation. The result is clearly written in his own Latin elegies, particularly the First, Fifth, and Seventh, with their strong accent of sensuous feeling and their only partly chastened Ovidian tone. The time to which he refers would be about his nineteenth year. At a later period he evidently felt the need of regarding the activities of this epoch with some indulgence. He implies, however, that even then his zest for the elegists was attended with an idealistic reaction which soon led to his deserting them for higher objects. Becoming an adept in rejecting the grosser enticements of the flesh he finds in Dante and Petrarch with their exaltation of woman and their refinement of the sentiment of love the embodiment of his new aspirations. The Italian Sonnets, closely imitated from Petrarch, may, though their precise date is uncertain, be taken as the immediate fruits of Milton's second literary discipleship. A more decided advance in point of view is indicated in the next sentence: "And long it was not after when I was confirmed in this opinion, that he who would not be frustrate of his hope to

write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poet." The key to this is furnished by the Sixth Elegy, in which Milton takes farewell of the mood of lax indulgence in favor of an earnest asceticism. The formula given in this work for the discipline of an epic poet is so closely parallel to that in the *Apology* as to make it clear that in the quoted passage Milton is looking back to and thinking in terms of his meditation of 1629. We may assume that he is recording a more or less definite resolution regarding his life work, a resolution which we may associate with his coming of age in the same month in which the Latin poem was written. The poem *On the Nativity* followed immediately after, in earnest of his future devotion to the highest themes.

Passing over more transient moods and influences which may have intervened, Milton next sets forth his enthusiasm for the literature of chivalry. He is referring, I think, not to his earliest acquaintance with the stories of knighthood in Geoffrey or Malory, but to a period of more serious occupation with them as they were interpreted and moralized by the poets of the Renaissance. Above all he is thinking of the "solemn cantos" of the "sage and serious" Spenser, who becomes henceforth a dominant influence in his poetic aspirations. The time is the Horton period or slightly earlier; Milton's present interests are leading him toward the selection of an Arthurian subject for his projected epic. The time, however, is not ripe and he lingers awhile in the easier paths of pastoral poetry. Meanwhile he is mingling with his zeal for romantic poetry the study of philosophy. The character of his reference and his bracketing of Plato and Xenophon show very clearly that it is the high doctrine of love and

virtue as set forth in the *Symposium* that chiefly attracts him. Such "abstracted sublimities" fit well with the concrete embodiments in Spenser, who had already assimilated them. But in thus turning toward the Renaissance star of Platonic love Milton also turns to its counterpart of Christian chastity, dwelling with special eagerness on the image of the heavenly nuptials of the pure as given in the fourteenth chapter of Revelation. The outcome of these elevated yet fervid imaginings is *Comus,* in which the correlative influences of Spenserian, Platonic, and Apocalyptic allegory are clearly to be traced. *Lycidas* and the *Epitaphium Damonis,* the latter with its expression of an impassioned and idealizing friendship, represent, perhaps, a further stage in Milton's Platonism, in which he abandons the Renaissance substitution of love of woman for that of man as unsound. Both works, like *Comus,* close with image of the union of the pure soul with the Heavenly Bridegroom. They represent the completion of the first full cycle of Milton's poetical activity and the culmination of the youthful experience implied in the passage from the *Apology.* He returns, indeed, to the subject of love in *Paradise Lost* and still deals with it in Platonic terms, but the whole tone is changed to a Puritan sobriety. The praise of chastity has now become the praise of wedded love. The heavenly marriage finds its counterpart on earth and the mystic raptures of the garden of Adonis are transferred to the more human joys of Eden.

In writing the passage from the *Apology* Milton's vision is wholly retrospective and it embraces only one element in his experience, but that element is to be recognized as primary in its claims on his attention during the period of his youth and in its domination of his more intense and

personal poetic expression. Meanwhile, however, his cultural interests were broadening and his purposes in art and life were defining themselves more sharply. The political thought of the ancient orators and historians, and the public problems of his own day, though they exercise as yet but little influence in his creative works, are gaining increasing hold on his attention. His conception of virtue is broadening to include justice and morality in the body politic, and the idea of his own service to his countrymen as one of spiritual and intellectual leadership is acquiring a patriotic and indeed a religious fervor. The explicit record of these interests takes the form of a description of the function of the poet in a personal digression in *The Reason of Church Government,* written a year earlier than the statement in the *Apology* but better representing the mature aims which are finally to dominate Milton's poetic art. The passage is as follows:

> Time serves not now, and perhaps I might seem too profuse to give any certain account of what the mind at home, in the spacious circuits of her musing, hath liberty to propose to herself, though of highest hope and hardest attempting; whether that epic form wherof the two poems of Homer, and those other two of Virgil and Tasso, are a diffuse, and the book of Job a brief model: or whether the rules of Aristotle herein are strictly to be kept, or nature to be followed, which in them that know art, and use judgment, is no transgression, but an enriching of art: and lastly, what king or knight, before the conquest, might be chosen in whom to lay the pattern of a Christian hero. And as Tasso gave to a prince of Italy his choice whether he would command him to write of Godfrey's expedition against the Infidels, or Belisarius against the Goths, or Charlemain

against the Lombards; if to the instinct of nature and the emboldening of art aught may be trusted, and that there be nothing adverse in our climate, or the fate of this age, it haply would be no rashness, from an equal diligence and inclination, to present the like offer in our own ancient stories; or whether those dramatic constitutions, wherein Sophocles and Euripides reign, shall be found more doctrinal and exemplary to a nation. The Scripture also affords us a divine pastoral drama in the Song of Solomon, consisting of two persons, and a double chorus, as Origen rightly judges. And the Apocalypse of St. John is the majestic image of a high and stately tragedy, shutting up and intermingling her solemn scenes and acts with a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies: and this my opinion the grave authority of Pareus, commenting on that book, is sufficient to confirm. Or if occasion shall lead, to imitate those magnific odes and hymns, wherein Pindarus and Callimachus are in most things worthy, some others in their frame judicious, in their matter most an end faulty. But those frequent songs throughout the law and prophets beyond all these, not in their divine argument alone, but in the very critical art of composition, may be easily made appear over all the kinds of lyric poesy to be incomparable. These abilities, wheresoever they be found, are the inspired gift of God, rarely bestowed, but yet to some (though most abuse) in every nation; and are of power, beside the office of a pulpit, to imbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue and public civility, to allay the perturbations of the mind, and set the affections in right tune; to celebrate in glorious and lofty hymns the throne and equipage of God's almightiness, and what He works, and what He suffers to be wrought with high providence in His church; to sing victorious agonies of martyrs and saints, the deeds and triumphs of just and pious nations, doing valiantly through faith against the enemies of Christ; to deplore the general

relapses of kingdoms and states from justice and God's true worship. Lastly, whatsoever in religion is holy and sublime, in virtue amiable or grave, whatsoever hath passion or admiration in all the changes of that which is called fortune from without, or the wily subtleties and reflexes of man's thoughts from within; all these things with a solid and treatable smoothness to paint out and describe. Teaching over the whole book of sanctity and virtue, through all the instances of example, with such delight to those especially of soft and delicious temper, who will not so much as look upon truth herself, unless they see her elegantly dressed; that whereas the paths of honesty and good life appear now rugged and difficult, though they be indeed easy and pleasant, they will then appear to all men both easy and pleasant, though they were rugged and difficult indeed.[2]

The function which Milton here proposes to himself is essentially a public one, analogous on the one hand to that of the prophets of Israel and on the other to that of the orators and statesmen of Greece and Rome. In the imagination of such a task his ambitions take the form of a loftier enthusiasm than the desire to rival an Ovid or even a Spenser, and though he is still questioning "what king or knight before the conquest might be chosen in whom to lay the pattern of a Christian hero," it is easy to see that such a theme will fail to satisfy his more comprehensive purposes. His passion for individual perfection henceforth clothes itself in zeal for public righteousness, and though he still cherishes for himself and for those who can receive it the esoteric doctrine of chastity and true love, his vision is more often directed toward outward

[2] For a discussion of this passage and for a complete collection of references in Milton's work illustrative of his conception of the poet's function see Langdon, *Milton's Theory of Poetry*.

objects and events. Both the personal and the public emotion and ideals are embodied in his later writings. Indeed, the two have become largely one.

But though Milton's purposes are already marked and established and the fundamental processes of his development from youth to maturity seen to be consummated, it required his later experience of life to complete the formation of his poetic mind. His participation in the struggles of the Commonwealth provided him with new materials of art. The disappointment of his hopes and the bitterness of personal affliction deepened his religious emotions and led him to seek again in the world of imagination the satisfactions which were denied to him in life. His blindness, especially, had an important effect on his inner life and was interpreted by him as an added evidence of the all but sacred character of his inspiration. In this connection I now quote a further prose passage, from the *Second Defence of the English People* (1654), which, set beside the great personal passages in *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes,* may stand as the final chapter in Milton's spiritual autobiography. It is in answer to the charge that his affliction was a judgment on him for his sins.

I wish that I could with equal facility refute what this barbarous opponent has said of my blindness; but I cannot do it; and I must submit to the affliction. It is not so wretched to be blind, as it is not to be capable of enduring blindness. But why should I not endure a misfortune which it behooves every one to be prepared to endure if it should happen; which may, in the common course of things, happen to any man; and which has been known to happen to the most distinguished and virtuous persons in history. Shall I mention those wise and ancient bards, whose mis-

fortunes the gods are said to have compensated by superior endowments, and whom men so much revered, that they chose rather to impute their want of sight to the injustice of heaven than to their own want of innocence or virtue? What is reported of the Augur Tiresias is well known, of whom Apollonius sung thus in his Argonauts:

> To men he dar'd the will divine disclose,
> Nor fear'd what Jove might in his wrath impose.
> The gods assigned him age, without decay,
> But snatched the blessing of his sight away.

But God himself is truth, in propagating which, as men display a greater integrity and zeal, they approach nearer to the similitude of God, and possess a greater portion of his love. We cannot suppose the Deity envious of truth, or unwilling that it should be freely communicated to mankind. The loss of sight, therefore, which this inspired sage, who was so eager in promoting knowledge among men, sustained, cannot be considered as a judicial punishment. Or shall I mention those worthies who were as distinguished for wisdom in the cabinet, as for valour in the field? And first, Timoleon of Corinth, who delivered his city and all Sicily from the yoke of slavery; than whom there never lived in any age, a more virtuous man, or a more incorrupt statesman: next Appius Claudius, whose discreet counsels in the senate, though they could not restore sight to his own eyes, saved Italy from the formidable inroads of Pyrrhus: then Caecilius Metellus the high priest, who lost his sight, while he saved, not only the city, but the palladium, the protection of the city, and the most sacred relics, from the destruction of the flames. On other occasions Providence has indeed given conspicuous proofs of its regard for such singular exertions of patriotism and virtue; what, therefore, happened to so great and so good a man, I can hardly place in the catalogue of misfortunes. Why should I mention others of later

times, as Dandolo of Venice, the incomparable Doge; or Boemar Zisca, the bravest of generals, and the champion of the cross; or Jerome Zanchius, and some other theologians of the highest reputation? For it is evident that the patriarch Isaac, than whom no man ever enjoyed more of the divine regard, lived blind for many years; and perhaps also his son Jacob, who was equally an object of the divine benevolence. And in short, did not our Saviour himself clearly declare that poor man whom he restored to sight had not been born blind, either on account of his own sins or those of his progenitors? And with respect to myself, though I have accurately examined my conduct, and scrutinized my soul, I call thee, O God, the searcher of hearts, to witness, that I am not conscious, either in the more early or in the later periods of my life, of having committed any enormity, which might deservedly have marked me out as a fit object for such a calamitous visitation. But since my enemies boast that this affliction is only a retribution for the transgressions of my pen, I again invoke the Almighty to witness, that I never, at any time, wrote anything which I did not think agreeable to truth, to justice, and to piety. This was my persuasion then, and I feel the same persuasion now. Nor was I ever prompted to such exertions by the influence of ambition, by the lust of lucre or of praise; it was only by the conviction of duty and the feeling of patriotism, a disinterested passion for the extension of civil and religious liberty. Thus, therefore, when I was publicly solicited to write a reply to the Defense of the royal cause, when I had to contend with the pressure of sickness, and with the apprehension of soon losing the sight of my remaining eye, and when my medical attendants clearly announced, that if I did engage in the work, it would be irreparably lost, their premonitions caused no hesitation and inspired no dismay. I would not have listened to the voice even of Esculapius himself from the shrine of Epidauris, in prefer-

ence to the suggestions of the heavenly monitor within my breast; my resolution was unshaken, though the alternative was either the loss of my sight, or the desertion of my duty: and I called to mind those two destinies, which the Oracle of Delphi announced to the son of Thetis:

> Two fates may lead me to the realms of night;
> If staying here, around Troy's wall I fight,
> To my dear home no more must I return;
> But lasting glory will adorn my urn.
> But, if I withdraw from the martial strife,
> Short is my fame, but long will be my life.

I considered that many had purchased a less good by a greater evil, the meed of glory by the loss of life; but that I might procure great good by little suffering; that though I am blind, I might still discharge the most honourable duties, the performance of which, as it is something more durable than glory, ought to be an object of superior admiration and esteem; I resolved, therefore, to make the short interval of sight, which was left me to enjoy, as beneficial as possible to the public interest. Thus it is clear by what motives I was governed in the measures which I took, and the losses which I sustained. Let then the calumniators of the divine goodness cease to revile, or to make me the object of their superstitious imaginations. Let them consider, that my situation, such as it is, is neither an object of my shame or my regret, that my resolutions are too firm to be shaken, that I am not depressed by any sense of the divine displeasure; that, on the other hand, in the most momentous periods, I have had full experience of the divine favour and protection; and that, in the solace and the strength which have been infused into me from above, I have been enabled to do the will of God; that I may oftener think on what he has bestowed, than on what he has withheld; that, in short, I am unwilling to exchange my con-

sciousness of rectitude with that of any other person; and that I feel the recollection a treasured store of tranquillity and delight. But, if the choice were necessary, I would, sir, prefer my blindness to yours; yours is a cloud spread over the mind, which darkens both the light of reason and of conscience; mine keeps from my view only the coloured surfaces of things, while it leaves me at liberty to contemplate the beauty and stability of virtue and of truth. How many things are there besides which I would not willingly see; how many which I must see against my will; and how few which I feel any anxiety to see! There is, as the apostle has remarked, a way of strength through weakness. Let me then be the most feeble creature alive, as long as that feebleness serves to invigorate the energies of my rational and immortal spirit; as long as in that obscurity, in which I am enveloped, the light of the divine presence more clearly shines. Then, in proportion as I am weak, I shall be invincibly strong; and in proportion as I am blind, I shall more clearly see. O! that I may thus be perfected by feebleness, and irradiated by obscurity! And, indeed, in my blindness, I enjoy in no inconsiderable degree the favour of the Deity, who regards me with more tenderness and compassion in proportion as I am able to behold nothing but himself. Alas! for him who insults me, who maligns and merits public execration! For the divine law not only shields me from injury, but almost renders me too sacred to attack; not indeed so much from the privation of my sight, as from the overshadowing of those heavenly wings which seem to have occasioned this obscurity; and which, when occasioned, he is wont to illuminate with an interior light, more precious and more pure.

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